

THE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN * BRILL

The Transformation of the Laity in Bergamo 1265-c.1400

Roisin Cossar



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THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE LAITY
IN BERGAMO, 1265-c. 1400

THE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN

PEOPLES, ECONOMIES AND CULTURES, 400-1500

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THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE LAITY IN BERGAMO 1265-c. 1400

BY

ROISIN COSSAR



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Cover illustration: A capital from the Palazzo della Ragione (town hall) in Bergamo showing a line of men with joined hands (an image of the equality and interdependence of the members of the commune). Reproduced by kind permission of Giles Knox.

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For Len

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Black and Pamela Gravestock, eds. *Confraternities in Early Modern Europe and America*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006, pp. 80–94; Roisin Cossar, “Lay Women in the Hospitals of Late Medieval Bergamo,” *Florilegium* 21 (2004), pp. 43–65; Roisin Cossar, “‘A Good Woman’: Gender Roles and Female Religious Identity in late medieval Bergamo,” *The Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 46 (2001), pp. 119–132; Roisin Cossar, “The Quality of Mercy: Confraternities and Public Power in Medieval Bergamo,” *The Journal of Medieval History* 27, 2 (2001), pp. 139–157. All excerpts are published with permission.

My interest in the history of medieval culture and society was generated by some exemplary scholars, and it is a pleasure to thank them now. Twenty years ago, Nancy Partner introduced me to ways of thinking about the past and more specifically about the Middle Ages that continue to shape the way I think about what I do. During my doctoral studies, Joseph Goering, Giulio Silano, Walter Goffart, Isabelle Cochelin and Nick Terpstra all asked their own particular questions that helped me consider and reconsider my own ideas about religious culture, gender, Italy, and sources.

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Len has written his own book while I was working on this one, but he willingly set aside his own projects to help me move forward with it. His openness to new experiences, his steadfast loyalty and his confidence in me are more than I could ever have asked for. This book is for him.

CURRENCY, NAMES, AND TRANSLATIONS

Writing and reading about the lives of ordinary people long ago takes a special act of imagination, and it can help to have some of the most fundamental features of that distant time made clear from the start. The currency described in records from Bergamo during the fourteenth century was “money of account” (the *lira imperialis*) rather than a coinage in daily use. This currency was normally divided into *lire*, *soldi*, and *denari*. One *lira* was equal to 20 *soldi*, and one *soldo* was equal to 12 *denari*. Gold florins were in circulation from the fourteenth century, although they are named less frequently in the records. The value of the florin shifted over time, but during the fourteenth century it was normally worth between 30 and 35 *soldi*.¹

The value of currency in Bergamo can most easily be understood by examining its buying power. During the fourteenth century, a house and a plot of land could range in price from 50 or 60 *lire* to hundreds or even a thousand *lire*. A large hospital cost 600 *lire* to build. The cost of a funeral ranged from a few *denari* for a pauper to as much as 10 or 11 *lire* for a prominent citizen. Manual laborers normally earned several *denari* for a day’s work, while a doctor could earn 10 gold florins for treating one patient.²

Documents I have drawn on in the course of this study recorded the names of people and places in Latin, although people in Bergamo would have used vernacular forms of those names in their daily lives. It is difficult to know exactly how vernacular personal names would have been rendered, and so I have chosen to retain Latin forms of personal names in most cases, rather than translating them into modern Italian equivalents. Only in cases where individuals are known outside these sources by their ‘Italianicized’ names (for instance Alberico da Rosciate) have I recorded their names as such. I have used the anglicized names of individuals who are known widely inside

¹ See Peter Spufford, *Handbook of Medieval Exchange* Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks, 13. (London: Royal Historical Society, 1986) 96–99.

² For comparisons of the value of the various currencies in use around Italy (and Europe) during the thirteenth century and afterwards, consult Spufford’s *Handbook of Medieval Exchange*.

and outside the scholarly community (such as Francis of Assisi). Finally, wherever possible I have updated names of communities, churches, and other places in the city and outlying areas to their modern spellings to aid readers who would like to find them on a map.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACVBg	Archivio Curia Vescovile, Bergamo
ASBg	Archivio di Stato, Bergamo
BCBg	Biblioteca Civica 'Angelo Mai', Bergamo
MIA archivio	paper archive of the confraternity of the Misericordia Maggiore, Bergamo
MIA perg.	parchments of the confraternity of the Misericordia Maggiore, Bergamo
PCB	parchments of the Commune of Bergamo
Perg. Cap.	parchments of the Cathedral Chapters of Bergamo

INTRODUCTION

In 1356, twenty-one men from the village of Schilpario, in the mountainous northern reaches of the diocese of Bergamo, gathered at their local church to testify in a jurisdictional dispute between two clerics, one the priest of the newly-built church of S. Antonio da Padova and the other the archpriest of the local baptismal church, or *pieve*, of S. Pietro. In their testimony, these laymen described the religious practices that were part of their daily lives. They stated that they (and many of their co-citizens) attended services at both S. Antonio and the *pieve*, although many preferred S. Antonio, as it was located in their village, while the *pieve* was further away in the town of Vilminore. Most said that they confessed their sins to one of the priests once each year, at Easter, describing how they spoke quietly while they confessed so that none of their neighbors would hear them (many additionally kept track of which of their neighbors had also confessed). They further described attending the marriages and the baptisms of their children and godchildren in both churches, and reported seeing local women blessed there after they had given birth. Many of the witnesses even offered observations about the clerics' performance of the sacraments; for instance, a few noted that their priest neglected to wear his robes when saying funeral services for the dead, and several commented, some with approval, and others not, on the tone of voice the two clerics used to celebrate the Mass.¹

For historians of late medieval Christianity, finding a document containing lay people's descriptions of their religious practice in their own words is a rare archival occurrence. Given the unusual qualities of this text, we might simply be content to transcribe it, presenting it as a window onto the world of the laity's religious activities in the Middle Ages. However, if we study the text more closely, we find that it raises as many questions as it answers about lay people and their religious activities. First, this group of lay witnesses included no women. In addition, the witnesses' descriptions of themselves

¹ The depositions are found in a notarial register held in ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 13v–52r. For further discussion of the text, see Chapter 4.

suggested that they were all of high social status. Did these particular men's religious experiences represent those of the entire community, men and women, rich and poor? Did poor men or women ever describe their religious commitments as these men did? What was the relationship between social status, gender, and religion among the laity in Schilpario and elsewhere? Did these forms of social identity matter within the religious realm, and if they did, how did they matter? This book takes these questions as a departure point, examining the connection between social mores and religious activities among the laity in the diocese of Bergamo in order to better understand the experience of lay people within the medieval Christian church. That experience changed notably during the fourteenth century, as the laity's position within Christian institutions came to parallel their status in the secular world. Accordingly, women and poor men found themselves shut out of meaningful participation in many institutions of lay Christian life.

To date, scholarly studies of the laity in the Middle Ages have largely focussed on the "spirituality" or "piety" of lay people. Such studies have usefully shown that during the Middle Ages, lay men and women who attended church, joined pious associations, and dictated their wills to notaries were drawn to these endeavors by the common goal of salvation. But most scholars have disregarded the effects of social distinctions such as gender and status on such activities.² And those scholars who acknowledge distinctions between men's and women's religious involvement often assume that women's religious experiences gave them power and a public identity that was otherwise denied them.³

² For example, see Augustine Thompson's study of religion in the Italian communes, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 1125–1325* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State Press, 2005). For a similar approach to the history of piety in England, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

³ See, for instance, Daniel Bornstein, "Introduction" in Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi, eds. *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, Margery Schneider, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Discussions of women's empowerment within medieval Christianity often concentrate on the work of female mystics and members of so-called "third orders." See, especially, the work of Caroline Walker Bynum, who beginning in the early 1980s wrote about the activities of unusual, mystical lay women, for example, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992). Another fundamental work that takes this approach is André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle*

Certainly the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were a time of great religious enthusiasm among the laity, as many lay men and women of different social ranks joined voluntary pious associations such as confraternities and hospitals across western Europe. Parishes, too, were dynamic sites for lay religious activities.⁴ The increasing number of wills created in the period also—arguably—represents a growing interest in individual salvation, since wills could be used to make pious bequests for the benefit of the soul. But arguing that lay people left their social distinctions at the door when they participated in Christian life seems overly simplistic. Instead, I argue here that the institutions formed by the laity, and the pious activities of lay people, reflected and reinforced the social structure of the community. With such contextual factors in mind, I contend that during the fourteenth century, lay religious culture was increasingly dominated by the values and life experiences of wealthy men. As these men gained status within the religious realm, women and the poor, always marginal players in this culture, were further marginalized from it. At the same time, some women and poor men negotiated a place for themselves within the religious realm in a variety of creative ways. The interplay between this growing elitism and challenges to it serves as the central focus for the entire study.

Confraternities, hospitals, and parishes

Those historians who study lay religious practice in the Middle Ages have often done so through the lens of one institution, the confraternity. Confraternities, voluntary pious organizations administered by and for their lay members, developed throughout western Europe

Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices, Daniel Bornstein, ed. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1993). A few recent studies examine ordinary lay women in their social context, such as Charles-Marie de la Roncière, “La Pieté Feminine Laique dans le Contado Florentin” in *Au Cloître et dans le Monde: Femmes, Hommes, et Sociétés (IX–XV siècle)* (Paris: Presses de l’Université Sorbonne, 2000) 205–215. Also see Katherine French’s examination of the gendered nature of the English parish in her monograph *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

⁴ Brian Pullan has called this process of enthusiastic religious participation “a medieval Counter Reformation.” Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971) 36.

during the Middle Ages and persisted—in changed form—even after the reforms of the Council of Trent. The rise of confraternity studies over the past two decades has proved fruitful for scholars seeking to explore how the laity responded to the Christian church's evolving interest in the “care of souls” of its lay members during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵ However, the confraternity was only one institution among a range of associations available to the medieval laity in their communities.

Besides confraternities, hospitals and parish churches were also important sites of lay religious participation in the Middle Ages. At this time, hospitals were modelled on monastic institutions, in which lay brothers and sisters gave up their possessions and joined the hospital to live out their lives in poverty.⁶ Before 1450, hospitals in Italian cities were notable for their flexibility, as they accommodated a wide range of social and religious opportunities for their needy inmates and wealthy oblates alike.⁷ Parishes were also significant to

⁵ Confraternity studies took shape under the tutelage of Giles Gérard Meersseman. See his fundamental three-volume work *Ordo Fratemitatis: Confraternite e Pietà dei Laici nel Medioevo* (Rome: Herder, 1977). Seminal studies of Italian confraternities include Ronald Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1982); James Banker, *Death in the Community: Memorialization and Confraternities in an Italian Commune in the Late Middle Ages* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988); John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); and essays in *Il buon fedele: Le confraternite tra medioevo e prima età moderna* (Verona: Cierre Edizioni, 1998). Studies of confraternities in the early modern period in Italy are also common. On Venice, see Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice*. On Bologna, see Nicholas Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See also see the journal *Confraternitas*, published by the Society for Confraternity Studies, for twice-yearly updates of current research in the field.

⁶ On hospitals in Italy, see the essays in Allen J. Grieco and Lucia Sandri, *Ospedali e Città: L'Italia del Centro-Nord, XIII–XVI secolo* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1997). For an early study, see Emilio Nasalli Rocca, *Il Diritto Ospedaliero nei suoi Lineamenti Storici* (Milano: Fondazione Sergio Mochi Onory per la Storia del Diritto Italiano, 1956). On hospitals in Lombardy, see the work of Giuliana Albin, including *Città e Ospedali nella Lombardia medievale* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1993) and essays in Albin, *Carità e Governo delle Povertà (secoli XII–XV)* (Milano: Edizioni Unicopoli, 2002). G.G. Meersseman has transcribed the statutes of twelfth-century hospital confraternities from Tudela and Viterbo. See *Ordo Fratemitatis*, Vol. 1, 136–149. For an early study of hospitals in England see Rotha Mary Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1909, reprinted 1966).

⁷ On the use of rules for the administration of hospitals and the flexibility of such rules, see Elizabeth Rothrauff, *Charity in a Medieval Community: Politics, Piety, and Poor-relief in Pisa, 1257–1312* (PhD thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1994) 65–66, and also Giuliana Albin, “L’assistenza all’infanzia nelle città dell’Italia Padana (secoli XII–XV)” in *Città e Servizi Sociali* (Pistoia: Centro di studi di storia e d’arte,

the religious life of the later Middle Ages. During the fourteenth century, a growing number of churches gained parochial rights as more people attended church regularly and sought to baptize their infants and bury their dead in their own communities.⁸ By examining lay religious culture within several institutions and sites, this book locates the history of the laity within a complex historical framework and thus complicates the static portrayal of the lay *ordo* sometimes found in conventional historiography.

Locating the laity within such a complex framework requires re-examining the concepts of “popular religion” and “lay religious culture,” which have both been a subject of scholarly debate for several decades. Early assertions that the laity’s experience of Christianity was superstitious, magical, or folkloric (and thus set against “bookish” clerical approaches to Christianity) have been outmoded for some time.⁹ More recently, scholars have instead examined the laity’s involvement in Christianity using the concept of “popular orthodoxy,” positing that clerics and lay people alike shared similar religious beliefs and influenced each others’ devotional activities.¹⁰ Some have

1990) 116. Antonio Rigon, in his study of the hospital and monastery of S. Giacomo di Monselice, proposes that the hospital be located within the framework of religious movements that rose in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with the aim of living according to the Gospels and thus returning to the life of the early Church. Rigon, *S. Giacomo di Monselice nel Medio Evo* (Padova: 1972) 46; and Anna Benvenuti Papi argues that the emerging perception of “the problem of assistance” intersected with the increased demand for lay participation in religious life during the thirteenth century. Anna Benvenuti Papi, “In Domo Bighittarum seu Viduarum”: Pubblica Assistenza e Marginalità Femminile Nella Firenze Medievale,” in *Città e Servizi Sociali*, 330.

⁸ Most studies of the parish in medieval Italy have been undertaken by Italian scholars. The fundamental work is Paolo Sambin, *L’Ordinamento Parrocchiale di Padova nel Medioevo* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1941) Also see Catherine Boyd, *Tithes and Parishes in Medieval Italy: the Historical Roots of a Modern Problem* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952) and essays in *Pievi e Parrocchie in Italia nel Basso Medioevo (sec. XIII–XV). Italia Sacra, Vol. 36.* (Roma: Herder Editrice, 1984) and those in Agostino Paravicini Bagliani e Véronique Pasche, *La Parrocchia nel Medio Evo: Economia, Scambi, Solidarietà* (Roma: Herder Editrice, 1995) which also examines parishes in other parts of western continental Europe.

⁹ For such views, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971). For an early, important methodological discussion of the topic of “popular religion” see Natalie Zemon Davis’ essay “Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion,” in Charles Trinkaus and Heiko Oberman, eds., *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) 305–336. In the same volume, see Marvin Becker’s “Aspects of Lay Piety in Early Renaissance Florence,” 177–199.

¹⁰ Bornstein, *The Bianchi of 1399* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) 6. Another

argued especially vehemently against the notion of a separation of lay and clerical religious outlook and practice.¹¹ Lay and clerical religious activities were thoroughly bound up with each other in a variety of contexts, including confraternities, hospitals, the parish, and the diocese. But we must also take into account the fact that lay people and clerics did not share the same culture, since clerics were set apart from lay people through their separate training, leading the two groups to adopt different “human conditions.”¹² Thus, although the idea of lay piety as a spiritual phenomenon isolated from the religious doctrines taught by the clergy may be a mistaken concept, we can and should study the laity as a distinct social group within the late medieval Church.

Bergamo

The book examines the laity in the northern Italian diocese of Bergamo between the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century (circa 1265–1400). The diocese of Bergamo was neither large nor politically influential during the Middle Ages, but because of the early complexity of its pious and ecclesiastical associations, it is invaluable as a site for a study of religious practice. During the Middle Ages, the city of Bergamo was home to two cathedrals: S. Vincenzo, inside the city walls, and S. Alessandro, just outside the walls. Both cathedrals housed chapters of canons, and from at least the twelfth century until the sixteenth century (when the Venetian government destroyed S. Alessandro and rededicated S. Vincenzo to, ironically enough, S. Alessandro) the two chapters fought over jurisdictional issues, especially over the issue of which of the two cathedrals was the “mother church” of the city.¹³

notable example of work in this vein is Robert Brentano, *A New World in a Small Place: Church and Religion in the Diocese of Rieti, 1199–1378* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

¹¹ Robert Brentano refers to the notion of a specifically lay piety as “mistaken and destructive.” *A New World in a Small Place*, 11.

¹² The phrase belongs to R.H. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215–c. 1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 236. On the distinctiveness of clerical culture in Italy, see Maureen Miller, “Religion Makes a Difference: Clerical and Lay Cultures in the Courts of northern Italy, 1000–1300” *American Historical Review* 105 (October 2000) 1095–1130.

¹³ See Giangiuseppina Valsecchi, “*Interrogatus . . . respondit*”: *Storia di un processo del*

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, both chapters also sought to keep the bishop as distant from their affairs as possible.

In addition to these two cathedrals, Bergamo was home to another significant church which also claimed a position of prominence in the city: the large civic basilica of S. Maria Maggiore. This “chapel of the city,” located beside the cathedral of S. Vincenzo, was established during the city’s communal period in the twelfth century and remained strongly linked to the commune through the Middle Ages. It served as the site of meetings of the commune and also had close links to the city-wide confraternity of the Misericordia Maggiore. Maureen Miller argues that the importance of S. Maria Maggiore as a symbol of communal power may have been the factor that motivated the bishop to build his new palace directly against the west wall of the church, thus “destabilizing the triumphalist building program of the commune” by cutting off the possibility of further enlargement of the church and making the bishop’s hall into “a nave to the commune’s church.”¹⁴

Into this climate of religious ferment in the thirteenth century, the lay religious associations of Bergamo were born. These proved notably important to both the social and religious life of the city and diocese. The charitable confraternity of the Misericordia Maggiore (or MIA) became especially significant. It was founded in 1265 at the behest of bishop Erbordus and members of both the Franciscans and Dominicans. Its membership numbered in the thousands during the fourteenth century, and it counted most civic luminaries among its members.¹⁵ Other confraternities in the city were also founded in the last decades of the thirteenth century, many around the city’s

XII secolo (Bergamo: Biblioteca Civica “A. Mai,” 1989) for more on the issues dividing the canons and for an edition of an 1187 court record of a dispute between them. For more general background on ecclesiastical institutions in Bergamo, see A. Caprioli et al., eds. *Diocesi di Bergamo* (Brescia: Editrice La Scuola, 1988).

¹⁴ Maureen Miller, *The Bishop’s Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) 188.

¹⁵ Published work on the MIA focuses largely on the company’s statutes and its female matriculation list. For the former, see Lester Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity: Lay Confraternities at Bergamo in the Age of the Commune* (Northampton, MA: Smith College Studies in History, 1988) and for the latter see Maria Teresa Brolis et al., *La matricola femminile della Misericordia di Bergamo (1265–1339)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2001). For an early study by the Bergamasque cleric who later became Pope John XXIII, see Angelo Roncalli, *La ‘Misericordia Maggiore’ di Bergamo e le altre istituzioni di beneficenza amministrate dalla congregazione di carità* (Bergamo, 1912).

seventeen *vicinie*, the neighborhoods which comprised its parish structure.¹⁶ In addition there were several flagellant or *disciplinati* companies in the city, along with a company for the relief of prisoners (the *Carcerati*) which had been founded in 1320. Bergamo was also home to more than a dozen hospitals of varying size and structure, created between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, to house and succor the sick, the needy, and pilgrims passing through the city.

Because of the large number and the vitality of its religious associations, Bergamo is an ideal site for a study of the intersection of religion and society in the Middle Ages. The richness of its extant archival materials also allows for a comparative examination of the activities of both men and women in its religious associations. An edition of the female matriculation list of the MIA, dating from between 1265 and 1339, has recently been published and should serve as a research tool for scholars working on confraternities throughout western Europe.¹⁷ The vast notarial fond of the *Archivio di Stato di Bergamo*, which contains the registers of more than one hundred fourteenth-century notaries, is also a significant resource for scholars working on the laity's religious commitments, since many of these registers document the religious involvements of both men and women. The rich archive of the MIA, and the smaller but also valuable archive of the *Curia Vescovile*, also hold significant resources for scholars working in this area. Documents within these repositories include wills, records from the episcopal court, confraternity matriculation lists, inventories of private households and religious institutions, registers of charitable expenses and donations received, and acts of property transfer between institutions and individuals. I have used all of these sources to paint a portrait of the laity from as many angles as possible.

Describing this image of the laity requires a close reading of these sources alongside an understanding of the social and political world in which lay people lived. Political events in Bergamo between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries resembled those in many other large and small cities on the Italian peninsula, as the city was buffeted by civil factional conflict, changed its form of government several times,

¹⁶ Such as the companies of S. Michele al Pozzo Bianco (founded in 1266), S. Alessandro della Croce (founded 1272), and S. Pancrazio (founded 1292). For their statutes, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity* 123–172.

¹⁷ See Brolis et al., *La matricola femminile della Misericordia di Bergamo*.

and ultimately found itself under the rule of the expanding Venetian republic. Before 1000, the bishop of Bergamo governed the city. By the end of the eleventh century, however, a group of citizens had begun to rule in his place, while the bishop retained jurisdiction over law in the city, a role which gradually eroded.¹⁸ At the beginning of the twelfth century, Bergamo, like most other cities on the Italian peninsula, was under the rule of these citizens, who together formed a consular commune. They were first mentioned in documents dating from 1108.¹⁹ As several recent scholars have argued, the establishment of the commune in Bergamo, as elsewhere, was a gradual phenomenon supported by the traditional civic powers. The first consuls of the commune were chosen from the group that had earlier held power as the bishop's advisors.²⁰

The communal government was politically weak and was threatened by factional violence through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. During the thirteenth century, the commune shifted between supporting the newly emergent Guelf and Ghibelline factions in the city in its attempt to remain free from the control of Guelf Milan.²¹ Private civil wars beset the city at this time. Armed societies and tower-building flourished.²² In 1226, for example, the powerful Colleoni

¹⁸ Bortolo Belotti, *Storia di Bergamo e dei bergamaschi* (Bergamo: Poligrafiche Bolis, 1959) Vol. 2, 314. For a more recent survey of the history of Bergamo in the communal and signorial age, see *Storia Economica e Sociale di Bergamo: I Primi Millenni. Il Comune e La Signoria*. (Bergamo: Fondazione per la Storia Economica e Sociale di Bergamo, 1999).

¹⁹ On the development of communes throughout Italy in the twelfth century, with some emphasis on Lombard (i.e. Milanese) examples, see Giovanni Tabacco, *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule*, Rosalind Brown Jensen, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) especially 185–190. Also see Philip Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

²⁰ Jörg Jarnut, “Gli inizi del comune di Bergamo: Note e appunti,” *Archivio Storico Bergamasco* 5 (1983) 207, and Jarnut, *Bergamo 568–1098: storia istituzionale, sociale ed economica di una città lombarda nell’alto medioevo* (Bergamo: Archivio Bergamasco, 1980) 149. Also see Claudia Storti Storch, *Diritto e istituzioni a Bergamo: dal comune alla signoria* (Milan, 1984). A poem written by Mosè del Brolo in the early twelfth century describes twelve consuls who governed the city. Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 21, and G. Gorni, “Il Liber Pergaminus di Mosè del Brolo,” *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser., 11 (1970) 409–460.

²¹ Giuseppe Scarazzini, ed., *Statuti Notarili di Bergamo* (Rome, 1977) 45. On the instability of the first decades of the thirteenth century and the religious revivals that occurred in response to this chaos, see Augustine Thompson, *Revival Preachers and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Italy: The Great Devotion of 1233* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

²² Belotti, *Storia di Bergamo*, Vol. 2, 10.

and Suardi families (nominally attached to the Ghibelline party) battled the Rivola clan (supporters of the Guelfs) for control of the city.²³ Then, in the spring of 1296, a series of battles between Guelfs and Ghibellines throughout the city led to the sacking of several important civic buildings. By the end of the century, the city's factions had been defined as "intrinsic" (*intrinseci*) and "extrinsic" (*estrinseci*), terms which referred to their status as exiles or citizens.²⁴ The instability of the communal period ended in the early 1330s, when the Visconti family of Milan established a lordship (*signoria*) over the city.

Although the Visconti did not move into an official role in the city until the 1330s, the first steps towards establishing a lordship over Bergamo began as early as the 1260s, when members of prominent Milanese families began to act as the city's *podestà* for more than the customary one-year period, thus beginning a shift in the status and role of that office-holder. In 1264, for example, Filippo della Torre was elected to the office of *podestà* for a ten-year period.²⁵ This era of Milanese rule over Bergamo did not mark the end of the city's independence, however. It was in 1332, when Azzone Visconti became lord, or *signore*, of the city, that a new political period began for the city. Azzone commissioned a new redaction of the civic statutes in which the *podestà* was no longer subject to the citizens but rather to the lord himself.²⁶ Under subsequent Visconti rulers, including Luchino (1339–1349) and archbishop Giovanni Visconti (1349–1354), more specific political changes took place which reinforced the subjection of Bergamo to the Milanese. For example, under Luchino, Milanese law took the place of Bergamasque law. Under Giovanni, the citizens' council was drastically reduced in size, from 300 to 144 members, all elected directly by the Visconti-appointed *podestà*.²⁷ His successor, Bernabò Visconti, is often depicted by modern historians as a dictatorial figure who intimidated the pop-

²³ Belotti, *Storia di Bergamo*, Vol. 2, 28. On the difficulty of identifying characteristics of groups calling themselves "Guelf" and "Ghibelline" during the mid-thirteenth century, the gradual rigidification of distinctions between the two groups and the decline of their "dynamic significance" in the fourteenth century, see Tabacco, 256–267.

²⁴ Belotti, *Storia di Bergamo*, Vol. 2, 65.

²⁵ Belotti, *Storia di Bergamo*, Vol. 2, 57.

²⁶ Belotti, *Storia di Bergamo*, Vol. 2, 107; and Alberto Fumagalli, *Bergamo: origini e vicende storiche del centro antico* (Milano, 1981) 147.

²⁷ Fumagalli, *Bergamo*, 149–150.

ulation throughout his thirty-year tenure.²⁸ The end of Visconti rule over the city arrived in 1428, when, after a war with the Venetians, the Visconti signed a treaty with the republic ceding the rule of the city to it.

These changes within the local government of Bergamo affected the religious culture of the city. Religious institutions created for the laity, including confraternities, hospitals, and the parish itself, were all governed according to models which resembled the communal governing structure of the city. In parallel with the commune's loss of independence and the rise of powerful lords over the city, many of these religious organizations similarly became more rigidly hierarchical. Other changes had a less significant effect. For example, during the fourteenth century Bergamo spent many years under papal interdict as a result of its ties to the imperial party, but the interdict had little effect on the organization of religious life in the city and diocese.²⁹

The book documents the history of lay people within the religious life of Bergamo over five chapters which are divided into three sections. The first section, made up of Chapters One and Two, describes fourteenth-century developments within the confraternities and hospitals of the city, as those institutions became the preserve of a small male elite. Confraternities are the subject of Chapter One, which explores the content of confraternity statutes, the identities of confraternity members (male, female, rich, poor) and their activities within the associations. Throughout I argue that confraternities, most notably the large charitable association called the MIA, were characterized by growing social divisions among members and the growing power of male officials during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Chapter Two, on hospitals, opens with a study of the physical structure and administration of hospitals (including S. Vincenzo, the

²⁸ Fumagalli, *Bergamo*, 152. Lorenzo Dentella writes that “ad ogni Ghibellino [Bernabo] diede piena facoltà di uccidere qualunque Guelfo, di abbruciargli le case, dal che si moltiplicarono gli omicidii, le estorsioni, gli incendi . . . a sconvolgere la quiete del nostro Contado[.]” Dentella, *I Vescovi di Bergamo* (Bergamo: Editrice Sant’Alessandro, 1939) 265.

²⁹ However, commentators draw on the example of the interdict to argue that the fourteenth century was the bleakest period in the city’s history. Antonio Pesenti, “La signoria viscontea e gli inizi della dominazione veneta” in Caprioli et al., *Diocesi di Bergamo*, 126.

city's largest hospital, and its leper hospital, S. Lazzaro) in Bergamo between the early fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. I then compare the communities of women which grew up within Bergamo's hospitals in the mid-fourteenth century with the increasing restrictions on lay women in hospitals after 1360. I argue that these restrictions were a response to the growing professionalization of hospitals as centers of medical care as well as a developing suspicion of women's activities in the public realm.

The second section, comprised of Chapters Three and Four, investigates how lay people's religious activities were affected by these changes to local pious and ecclesiastical institutions. Chapter Three moves back to confraternities to investigate the effect of growing hierarchies within those associations on their poor clients. The chapter is composed of three parts: a study of the changing identities of charitable donors, the growing gap between confraternities and their clients, and the way in which the poor reacted to confraternal charitable assistance. In this final section of the chapter I argue that the so-called "shame-faced poor," who were of high social status but limited financial means, became adept at petitioning confraternities for assistance in the mid-fourteenth century, while during the same time the working poor were increasingly relegated to a passive role as clients of confraternal charity.

Chapter Four moves away from lay pious associations to examine the relationship between some lay people (especially men) and their local clergy. I examine lay men's relationships with parish priests, archpriests, and ecclesiastical officials such as the vicar general, and I argue that although clerics sought to control the laity's religious acts and lay religious institutions during the fourteenth century, wealthy lay men resisted this control, and instead presented themselves as partners with the clergy in a spiritual journey. Lay women, on the other hand, had only a subservient role to play in these contexts, although when they could they made their voices heard. Poor men were also almost invisible in the ecclesiastical institutions of the city, but they were objects of interest to popular preachers such as Venturino of Bergamo, a Dominican friar who organized a pilgrimage of paupers from Bergamo to Rome in the 1330s.

The final section, Chapter Five, draws together multiple lay voices outside the context of institutions by investigating the content and composition of last wills and testaments in the fourteenth century. I argue that the will should be read as a text in which the voice of

the testator or testatrix and his or her social circle is audible throughout. Reading wills as texts created by multiple voices and with multiple emphases (on religion, the family, friends, and the community at large) reveals both similarities and differences in the way in which men and women of the same social status articulated their pious and social needs at the end of their lives. I demonstrate in particular that women, who lacked the financial resources of most male testators, were forced to use ingenuity in their disposal of those resources in their testaments. Examples from numerous women's wills underscore the ability of—and the need for—lay women to negotiate a role for themselves in the Christian realm throughout the century. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the responses of testators, both male and female, to the arrival of plague in Bergamo in 1361. I argue that as they created wills during this time of crisis, lay men and women articulated similar beliefs in the need for social solidarity and the continuing strength of Christian institutions.

PART ONE

CONFRATERNITIES AND HOSPITALS

PART ONE: CONFRATERNITIES AND HOSPITALS

The first two chapters of this book describe the structure and function of two of the most important lay religious associations in Bergamo. I argue that during the fourteenth century, lay confraternities and hospitals developed close ties to local civic social and political structures. As they did so, they restricted the participation of women and low-status men within them.

Chapter One investigates the changing nature of confraternities in Bergamo during the fourteenth century. To document changes within these institutions, I draw on confraternity statutes, membership lists containing the names of confraternity members (male, female, rich, poor) and other records of members' activities within the associations. Throughout the chapter I sustain that confraternities, especially the large charitable association of the *Misericordia Maggiore* (MIA), were impacted by growing social divisions among members and the increasing power of male officials at this time. At the same time, confraternities continued to emphasize the spiritual equality of all members: male and female, rich and poor.

Chapter Two employs a similar argument to the first chapter, but in this case the context is that of hospitals in Bergamo between the early fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Central to the chapter is a discussion of the way in which the communities of women which grew up within Bergamo's hospitals in the mid-fourteenth century shrank after increasing restrictions were imposed on the laity—and especially lay women—in hospitals after 1360.

CHAPTER ONE

RELIGIOUS SOLIDARITY AND CIVIC POWER: CONFRATERNITIES IN BERGAMO

To what extent did confraternities in Bergamo express “lay religious solidarity” in the fourteenth century?¹ In part, over the course of the century, confraternities reflected the growing fragmentation of the laity. The *Misericordia Maggiore* (MIA), most notably, became closely linked to civic government at this time and it helped to smooth the transition between communal and signorial government in the city. As the MIA gained better access to the institutions of civic power, it also became a civic power itself, seen in its regulation of smaller confraternities in the city and diocese during the mid-to-late fourteenth century and in its further marginalization of some already-marginal members, especially women and poor men, from active participation in the confraternity.

Yet, in their institutional structures and the experiences of their officials, confraternities in Bergamo continued to embrace the theological concept that all souls within the associations shared equally in spiritual benefits of membership. The response of members to this concept was enthusiastic. For instance, despite their second-class status within the institutional life of the confraternity, women evinced considerable enthusiasm for membership in the MIA. The co-existence of social stratification and spiritual equality in Bergamo’s confraternities reached its height with the experience of Alberico da Rosciate, the noted jurist and scholar, who became a powerful minister of the MIA in the mid-fourteenth century, but then underwent a religious conversion and rejected the trappings of power before his death.

¹ James Banker has argued that this was the function of confraternities in the town of San Sepolcro during the same period. Banker, *Death in the Community*, 40–41.

Gender and Social Status in Confraternal Statutes

The statutes of Bergamo's confraternities illuminate the complexity of lay religious experience in the diocese.² On one hand, the founders and officials of confraternities used confraternal statutes to establish hierarchies among members. For instance, in their descriptions of men's and women's entrance into the companies, the creators of statutes implied that male members were more valuable than their female counterparts. On the other hand, their creators also sought to encourage unity among the membership, establishing the same spiritual benefits for all members. In their embodiment of these contradictions between social realities and pious ideals, confraternity statutes are a valuable source for understanding the multifaceted experiences of the laity within the religious realm in Bergamo.³

Statutes have sometimes been seen as "the most influential [text] shaping members' spirituality" because they were read to members regularly.⁴ But many such statutes emphasized organization over spiritual activities, describing in detail such organizational matters as the election of officials, the entrance of new members, and the administration of donations and bequests.⁵ The impact of statutes on members' spirituality is also questionable since not all confraternity members were equally familiar with the organizations' statutes. In the MIA, which was arguably the most important (and certainly the largest) confraternity in Bergamo, only some male members, the brothers

² On the significance and uses of confraternal statutes, see Meersseman, *Ordo Fratemitatis*, Vol. 1, 18–21. Many studies of confraternities rely heavily on statutes for their information about the associations. See, for instance, Banker, *Death in the Community*, which includes an edition of the statutes of three confraternities in San Sepolcro. Jennifer Fisk Rondeau provides a new way of thinking about statutes as performative texts in "Conducting Gender: Theories and Practices in Italian Confraternity Literature," in *Medieval Conduct*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Robert L.A. Clark (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) 183–206, esp. 184–188.

³ Lester Little's editions of the statutes of eight of Bergamo's confraternities and his discussion of those statutes (see *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 67–82 and for the editions, 101–219) serve as the foundation for this section. In his essay on the form and content of the statutes, Little describes variations among the texts, and he uses them to link confraternal structures to other social and political organizations in Bergamo. However, his discussion does not explicitly address the way in which confraternity statutes reflected and encouraged social divisions between confraternity members, especially men and women.

⁴ Bornstein, *The Bianchi of 1399*, 33.

⁵ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 68–69. Little compares confraternal statutes to those of political and social organizations of the same period.

(*fratres*), were required to listen to twice-yearly readings of the confraternal rule.⁶ The confraternity's female members and, it seems, some of its male members were not included in this exercise during the fourteenth century. Furthermore, even if ordinary members were aware of the content of their company's statutes, they, like other confraternity members elsewhere, may not have heeded their instructions, which often included prohibitions of such common leisure activities as gambling and frequenting taverns.⁷ Rather than as expressions of the spirituality of all confraternity members, confraternal statutes should be seen as expressions of the views of the companies' male officials and the mendicant friars who inspired their creation.

Since they were created by male officials and members of religious orders, confraternal statutes in Bergamo reflected the social outlook and experiences of those groups.⁸ The connections between the structure of confraternities and that of civic political institutions have been frequently noted.⁹ In Bergamo, for example, the MIA identified among its corps of officials a *patronus*, who was to take on the responsibility of communicating with the civic government. The statutes stated that the official would "speak for [the MIA] both before the officials, or *anziani*, of the *popolo* and also in the council of the commune of Bergamo."¹⁰ Confraternal statutes also reveal that the functions of confraternities, the commune, and neighborhood, or *vicinia* associations closely resembled each other. For instance, the confraternity of S. Pancrazio, founded in the later thirteenth century, took on the same sacred and secular responsibilities as the *vicinia* associations of S. Eufemia, S. Andrea, and numerous others. These

⁶ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 116. Other groups, such as the parish confraternity of S. Michele al Pozzo Bianco, did schedule regular readings of the statutes for all members. Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 136.

⁷ On the other hand, Nicholas Terpstra argues that "confratelli took their self-image from strict statutes even when in practice they bent the rules." *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna*, 50.

⁸ Scholars who have emphasized mendicant influence in confraternities have argued that confraternal membership did not reflect social norms. Ronald Weissman claims that the mendicant influence behind the foundation of lay confraternities contributed to a "rejection of that neighborhood and kin group particularism that was characteristic of the life of the ordinary late medieval townsman." Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, 44.

⁹ For Bergamo, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 69. Also see Bornstein, "Corporazioni Spirituali: Proprietà delle Confraternite e Pietà dei Laici," *Ricerche di Storia Spirituale e Religiosa*, 48 (1995) 77.

¹⁰ For the MIA's rule, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 107–121.

included caring for the liturgical furnishings of the local church, maintaining and renovating the church building, and even selecting clergy to officiate in the church.¹¹

Not only did confraternal statutes establish connections between the companies and political institutions in the city, they also underscored the social hierarchies present in late medieval civic life. Those companies which admitted both male and female members sought to differentiate the two groups in their statutes by instituting a novitiate for male members but not for women, thus placing male members above their female counterparts. The entrance of a male novice into the MIA began when the name of the prospective member and the day and time at which he professed the desire to become a member were recorded in a register.¹² For a year, officials would observe the novice's conduct, so that they could decide whether he was an "appropriate member," especially whether he could sustain "the burdens (*onera*) of this blessed company."¹³ When a year had elapsed, the minister and other officials of the MIA met to decide whether the novice could become a full-fledged member of the company. An agreement to accept an individual was followed by writing his name into one of the lists of members, after which he paid his dues to the company.¹⁴ This method of introducing new male members into the MIA served as a model for other pious organizations. The confraternity of S. Michele al Pozzo Bianco, founded a year after the MIA in 1266, and the confraternity for the support of prisoners, (the *Carcerati*), founded in the early fourteenth century, also required a novitiate.¹⁵ But other confraternities which did not

¹¹ On the liturgical responsibilities of the *vicinia* association of S. Andrea in the later fourteenth century, see ASBg, Notarile, B. Bondo, busta 103, 465–470. For a description of the activities of the confraternity of S. Pancrazio, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 157–172. Also see Gloria Caminiti, *La Vicinia di S. Pancrazio a Bergamo: Un Microcosmo di Vita Politico-Sociale (1288–1318). Contributi allo Studio del Territorio Bergamasco*. (Bergamo: Provincia di Bergamo, 1999) 138–139.

¹² This was probably a small paper register. A small fragment of such a register survives in the manuscript archive of the Biblioteca Civica 'Angelo Mai' in Bergamo. BCBg, Specola Doc 403.

¹³ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 112.

¹⁴ Other groups with connections to the mendicants, such as the Franciscan Order of Penitence, also required members to undergo a novitiate. See BCBg, MIA perg. 4046 and MIA archivio 718, 366v.

¹⁵ For the rule of S. Michele, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 123–137. For the *Carcerati*, see Little, 173–179.

emulate the MIA also included novitiate as part of their expectations of members. For instance, the *Disciplinati* confraternity of S. Maria Magdalena, established in 1336, had a two-month period for prospective members in which they would be observed by the officials of the company.¹⁶

The novitiate described above applied only to men. Women who wished to join the few confraternities that would admit them did not undergo the same scrutiny as their male counterparts.¹⁷ The MIA's statutes, which describe the entry of men into the company in great detail, said little about the process by which women became members. The statutes stated only that women's names were not recorded in the same membership book as those of male members, but were noted in another, "so that something could be known about these women and so that alms could be collected from them occasionally."¹⁸ Similarly, women joining the flagellant confraternity of S. Maria Magdalena were not as closely examined as their male counterparts, although they had to ask their husbands, fathers, or brothers for permission to join.¹⁹ The fifteenth-century statutes of that company further stated that a woman could join the company if she had "permission" to do so from her sons, if they had reached the age

¹⁶ For the rule of S. Maria Magdalena, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 191–205.

¹⁷ For many years, studies of confraternities gave little attention to female confraternity members. Many of the seminal works on medieval confraternities in Italy contain only a brief mention of women. See, for instance, Meerseman, *Ordo Fratemitatis*, Vol. 1, 498–504; Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence*, 110–111 and Banker, *Death in the Community*, 47–48, and 148–150. More recent studies of women in confraternities include Giovanna Casagrande, "Women in Confraternities between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age: Research in Umbria" *Confraternitas* 5(2) (1994) 3–13; *Religiosità Penitenziale e Città al Tempo dei Comuni*, 431–438; and "Confraternities and Lay Female Religiosity in Late Medieval and Renaissance Umbria" in Nicholas Terpstra, ed. *The Politics of Ritual Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 48–66. Also see Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna*, 116–132. For the matriculation list of women in the MIA in Bergamo, see Brolis et al, *La Matricola Femminile della Misericordia di Bergamo (1265–1339)*. Maria Teresa Brolis has also published several discussions of the matriculation list, including "Confraternite Bergamasche Bassomedievali: Nuove Fonti e Prospettive di Ricerca," in *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 49 (1995) 337–354; Maria Teresa Brolis and Giovanni Brembilla, "Mille e più donne in Confraternità," in *Il buon fedele: Le confraternite tra medioevo e prima età moderna*, 107–134; and Brolis, "A Thousand and More Women: A Register of Women for the Confraternity of Misericordia Maggiore in Bergamo, 1265–1339," *The Catholic Historical Review*, 88, (2) (April 2002) 230–246.

¹⁸ BCBg, MIA archivio 937, 2v; and Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 112.

¹⁹ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 204.

of majority.²⁰ In most of the other confraternities in Bergamo women were not openly welcomed as members. Women's absence from confraternities, and their restricted roles in the confraternities that did admit them, reinforces Jennifer Fisk Rondeau's argument that confraternity founders compared women's roles in the associations to their ideal domestic role as actors within "male-controlled bounds."²¹ Similarly, the restrictions placed on women's social roles within confraternities conform to Max Weber's view that the equality of male and female souls before God did not guarantee "equality of participation in cult" during the Middle Ages.²²

The relationship between confraternities and clerics described in statutes from Bergamo's confraternities was as complicated as that between men and women in the organizations. Clerics or religious were often credited as co-founders of confraternities; in the case of the MIA, Franciscans, Dominicans, and the bishop were said to have banded together to give their approval to its foundation. At the same time, lay men, not clerics, led and administered the associations.²³ Still, several confraternities in Bergamo invited clerics to join their groups, and they often gave them special privileges. The *Carcerati* and the MIA both welcomed "priests, clerics, and religious" and asked members to show them reverence "as spiritual fathers," stating that clerics who wished to serve as officials should be given a place in the council.²⁴ Furthermore, the MIA, in a nod to its foundation by both the Franciscans and Dominicans, added that members of either order could serve as officials if they chose to join the company.²⁵

²⁰ Guido Tammi, "Lo Statuto dei Disciplini di S. Maria Maddelena di Bergamo," in *Il Movimento dei Disciplinati nel Settimo Centenario dal suo inizio* (Perugia, Centro di Ricerca e di studio sul movimento dei Disciplinati, 1986) 266. Meersseman has argued that this division among men and women was common to flagellant confraternities. Meersseman, *Ordo Fratemitatis*, Vol. 1, 503.

²¹ Fisk Rondeau, "Homosexuality and Civic (Dis)order" in Terpstra, ed., *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*, 35.

²² Cited in Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Mysticism and Asceticism of Medieval Women," in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 55.

²³ Clerics helped to found the confraternities of the MIA (both Franciscan and Dominican friars worked alongside the bishop and several canons of the city's two cathedrals. On the foundation of the MIA, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 111), on the *Carcerati*, 175, on the Misericordia of the outlying town of Nembro, 183, and on the parish confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna, 209.

²⁴ The language of the two statutes was almost identical, suggesting that the *Carcerati*, formed almost 50 years after the MIA, had used the older confraternity's statute as a model.

²⁵ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 118 and 178–179. Meetings of the MIA in the

Parish confraternities also sometimes established a notable role for their local priests. The statutes of the confraternity of S. Michele al Pozzo Bianco stated that the company must seek the approval of the parish priest of S. Michele if officials wanted to amend the statutes.²⁶ The priest was also to give advice to the officials of the company during distributions of alms to the indigent of the parish.²⁷ But not all parish confraternities gave such significant roles to their parish priests. For instance, the company of S. Alessandro in Colonna, one of the largest parishes in the city, only allowed priests to serve as officials from time to time, perhaps in recognition of the potential for these clerics to dominate a company with very close ties to the parish itself.²⁸ Each of these confraternities reaffirmed the role of clerics as spiritual teachers and advisors to the lay community. However, at the same time, clerics were only to occupy that role if invited by confraternity officials, emphasizing the essentially lay character of the associations even in their relations with their spiritual guides.

While confraternal statutes implicitly articulated divisions among men and women, laity and clerics, explicit within the texts was a desire for the spiritual and moral unity of all members within the confraternal community. This desire for unity is seen in instructions to members about their public activities and their personal moral choices. In these instructions, confraternities presented an ideal vision of all members connected by common threads of decency and public morality. Following the lead of the MIA, most companies instructed their members, both male and female, to be faithful, lawful and honest, and counselled them against gambling, drinking or entering other "evil places."²⁹ Understandably, no companies would tolerate heretics,

thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were often held in the Dominican church of S. Stefano, further underscoring the connection between the confraternity and the mendicant order.

²⁶ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 135.

²⁷ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 136.

²⁸ BCBg, AB 394, 5r lists the priest of the parish church of S. Alessandro as one of the cellarers of the company in 1306. For the statutes of S. Alessandro, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 207–219.

²⁹ On *turpibus locis*, see the statutes of S. Maria Magdalena, Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 196. Unlike the members of religious guilds in other places, notably England, members of Bergamo's confraternities did not regularly share a common meal. On English religious guilds and their convivial feasts, see Gervase Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast," *Journal of British Studies* 33 (October 1994) 437.

nor would the confraternities welcome anyone known to participate in public usury.³⁰ Proscriptions of sexual misbehavior were not confined to female members. Female prostitutes were expressly denied entry to any confraternity, but the *disciplinati* statutes included a warning that any man who kept a lover (*amaxia*) would not be allowed into the company.³¹

Statutes also envisioned members united through participation in charitable, penitential, and devotional acts. Those confraternities that engaged in regular almsgiving encouraged all members to donate alms to the best of their ability.³² All of the companies encouraged other members and officials to visit any other member who was ill or needy.³³ Penance and devotions could also unite members. For instance, female members of S. Maria Magdalena were prohibited from engaging in self-flagellation, but they, along with male members, could observe figures of Christ and Mary and the Magdalen, praying to them together with *magnam reverentiam* during the company's services.³⁴ Penitential activities such as confession were also responsibilities of all members and so acted as a unifying force too. Charitable confraternities such as the MIA and the *Carcerati* required their members, both male and female, to confess twice each year. Finally, most confraternities explicitly stated that all members shared equally in the spiritual benefits of membership. The MIA, for instance, noted that all who joined the company, *tam viri quam mulieres*, were participants, in life and death, in its charitable and devotional work.³⁵

Most statutes proclaimed that all members of a confraternity were united by their participation in confraternal religious activities, but the definition of those activities varied substantially from one group

³⁰ These instructions applied to both men and women, although not all companies made room for female members. Those that accommodated female members were the MIA, the Misericordia of Nembro, and the disciplinati company of S. Maria Magdalena. For the MIA's statements about members' morality, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 112.

³¹ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 195. For the statutes of S. Caterina (1279), see Little, 151–155, for S. Alessandro della Croce (1272), see Little, 139–149. For S. Michele see Little, 131–132. For a brief discussion of other confraternities' adoption of the MIA's language in their statutes, see Little, 72.

³² The MIA told members to give alms *secundum quod ipsi sibi sentiunt quod possint facere*, Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 113.

³³ Such as the company of S. Michele, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 134.

³⁴ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 197.

³⁵ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 117.

to another. Nicholas Terpstra has argued that the pious activities that confraternities in Renaissance Bologna required of their members depended on a group's status as either a "praising" or "penitential" organization. The former groups were more inclusive and flexible in their requirements of members, and the latter were more exclusive and rigorous. This model applies, Terpstra argues, because the praising companies saw themselves as aids to "greater public devotion" in their communities, while the penitential groups defined themselves as an "apostolate of the virtuous."³⁶ Similarly in Bergamo, the statutes of charitable confraternities contained fewer specific instructions about members' religious activities than their penitential counterparts. For instance, in its statutes, the MIA did not instruct its members to attend church regularly, only requiring them to attend its meetings to give alms twice a month.³⁷ In contrast, S. Maria Magdalena, a penitential organization, not only instructed its members to meet every Sunday in order to take part in processions throughout the city, but the officers of the company also expected members to go to church and hear mass every morning.³⁸ Most companies instructed members to confess, but charitable confraternities were again more liberal than the penitential groups. The MIA and the *Carcerati* required once or twice-yearly confessions of members, while S. Maria Magdalena expected members to confess once each month.³⁹ In its expectations of its members, S. Maria Magdalena presented them as the "true lay people" of their community.⁴⁰

The confraternity of S. Maria Magdalena, after its foundation in 1336, also presented its task as that of creating and protecting civic peace.⁴¹ The founders of the *disciplinati* confraternity envisioned

³⁶ Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna*, 85–86. James Banker notes the way in which flagellant companies in San Sepolcro established a "sacred community" within the secular world of the town. Banker, *Death in the Community*, 153.

³⁷ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 113. For instructions on church attendance, see Little, 126, 141, 153, 185, 212.

³⁸ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 196–197.

³⁹ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 177–178.

⁴⁰ Giovanna Casagrande uses the phrase *veri laici* to describe flagellants in Umbrian cities. Casagrande, *Religiosità Penitenziale e Città al Tempo dei Comuni*, 353.

⁴¹ On the origins of flagellant confraternities in Italy and statutes from confraternities in Bologna and Vicenza see Meersseman, *Ordo Fratemitatis*, Vol. 1, 451–512. Also see *Il Movimento dei Disciplinati nel Settimo Centenario dal suo inizio* and *Risultati e Prospettive della Ricerca sul Movimento dei Disciplinati* (Perugia: Deputazione di Storia Patria per L'Umbria, 1972).

members taking part in regular processions (on Sundays and feast days) *in memoriam passionis Domini nostri Iesu Christi*. During these processions, male members would flagellate themselves (*verberando se*) while processing.⁴² The purpose of self-flagellation was to submit the body and, by extension, the community to the authority of God, thus doing away with violent conflicts among members of the community.⁴³ S. Maria Magdalena's desire to work for civic peace was also made clear in the statements about civic political life found in the company's statutes. These statutes enjoined members to pray for the health of the *podestà*, the captain of the *popolo*, the *anziani* and councillors of the city, and for the peace of the city itself, thus linking the company's religious activities with peaceful civic politics.⁴⁴ The statutes also established that members of S. Maria Magdalena should attend a mass for the Commune once a month.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the statutes emphasized that members should not fight with each other, nor join factions within the city so that they might help maintain the "peaceful state" of the commune.⁴⁶ Not all flagellant confraternities in Italy saw civic peace as their goal. While some, including the *disciplinati* company in Bologna, were committed to furthering civic peace, in San Sepolcro, the statutes of flagellant companies enjoined members to treat flagellation as a personal penitential activity.⁴⁷

The distinctions between penitential confraternities such as S. Maria Magdalena and their charitable counterparts are well-described by Terpstra's binary model of praising and penitential groups. However, this model is complicated by the wide range of expectations of members recorded in the statutes of Bergamo's parish confraternities. Most parish confraternities required their members to engage in the same religious activities as other lay people, confessing once a year, attending mass regularly, and giving small amounts of alms to the poor.

⁴² Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 196.

⁴³ This was the aim of flagellants in Florence. Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 113–154.

⁴⁴ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 201.

⁴⁵ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 81, 199, and 201.

⁴⁶ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 196–197. This focus on the flagellants' promotion of civic welfare through penitential acts declined by the fifteenth century, when members ceased to pray for the civic health of the officials of the commune and instead simply promised not to become involved in factional disputes. This may reflect political changes in the city, as Bergamo was governed by the Venetians after 1428 and local political structures had declined in power. See Tammi, "Lo Statuto dei Disciplini di S. Maria Maddelena di Bergamo."

⁴⁷ Banker, *Death in the Community*, 154. Meersseman, *Ordo Fratemitatis*, Vol. 1, 470.

The parish confraternities of S. Caterina, S. Alessandro della Croce and S. Alessandro in Colonna, for instance, only required annual confession of their members.⁴⁸ But by contrast, the company of S. Michele al Pozzo Bianco set out a long list of religious and devotional expectations for its members that nearly equalled those of S. Maria Magdalena. These differing requirements suggest not only that some neighborhoods in Bergamo were pious “hot spots,” but also that the religious life of the city as a whole was characterized by geographic diversity in the later thirteenth century.⁴⁹

S. Michele, like the other companies organized around parish churches throughout Bergamo, was a small group, with 24 members listed in its foundation document of 1266.⁵⁰ The creators of the statutes asserted their status as laymen, not clerics, in the prologue.⁵¹ They noted that the company welcomed as a member any man from the parish interested in participating more actively in devotional life, and presented a lengthy list of requirements for them. The statutes contained 32 chapters, just one less than S. Maria Magdalena and significantly more than any other confraternity in the city. Unlike the statutes of other companies, which tended to begin with descriptions of the administrative structure of the organizations, S. Michele’s statutes gave priority to its pious requirements by first focussing on the religious activities of members and before moving on to describe the administration of the company. Some of the rules were similar to those of other companies: members were to confess twice a year and attend mass every Sunday and on nine named feast days of the year.⁵² But many rules were unique to S. Michele: members were

⁴⁸ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 142, 154, and 212.

⁴⁹ The particularly “religious” character of the parish of S. Michele has been noted by others. Maria Teresa Brolis writes that the neighborhood of S. Michele al Pozzo Bianco had traditionally housed a number of religious foundations, including a house of Humiliati, and a community of Augustinians. Brolis, *La Matricola Femminile*, CV. Despite its religious rigor, the confraternity of S. Michele appeared infrequently as a recipient of donations or testamentary bequests. It is not even mentioned in most testamentary lists of bequests to confraternities.

⁵⁰ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 125.

⁵¹ *cum quidem viri layci de parochia sancti Michaelis de Puteo pergamensis Deum timentes inter se . . . sanctum et laudabile consorcium ordinassent*. Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 125.

⁵² And in contrast to other statutes, which did not specify what “just cause” might be for not fulfilling these commitments, the creators of the statutes of S. Michele defined specific circumstances in which members could be absent from church without penalty. These included the illness or death of a relative, one’s own illness, absence from the city, or attendance at the MIA’s services. Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 127.

told to take communion in both kinds from their priest on the feast day of S. Dominus, in October.⁵³ Members of S. Michele were also required to belong to the MIA, a requirement not shared by any other confraternity in the city (members of S. Michele were in fact encouraged to join “any congregation approved by the Catholic church”).⁵⁴ Further, members were expected to share in the purchase of items such as oil, candles, and wax for services.⁵⁵ Finally, members were required to listen not only to four readings of the statutes annually, but also one annual reading from the *Passionario*; no other confraternity mentioned liturgical readings to members.⁵⁶

The officials of S. Michele also attempted to regulate the public behavior of confraternity members more thoroughly than their counterparts in other companies. Members were warned not to go about at night singing, and were asked to exhibit “reverence” while in church.⁵⁷ The confraternity of S. Alessandro della Croce also warned members not to talk or laugh during services, and instead advised them to listen to prayers “intently and devotedly.”⁵⁸ However, S. Michele was the only confraternity in the city to fine its members for such offenses, including absence from church, and it was also the only parish confraternity that sought to control members’ behavior in the area immediately outside the church: anyone found engaging in “dishonest” pursuits within six *capicia* of the church could be fined by the cellarer.⁵⁹

Through its statutes, S. Michele emerges as the most intensely religious of Bergamo’s confraternities. Founded during a period of

⁵³ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 126–127. In the Middle Ages, the church of S. Michele al Pozzo Bianco contained an altar dedicated to S. Donnino which contained a thirteenth-century chalice which would have been used for this communion. Gabriele Rosa, “Statuto di Società Pia in Bergamo nel 1260,” *Archivio Storico Italiano* tom. 14, part 1 (1861) 30–31.

⁵⁴ The MIA and the confraternity of S. Michele remained connected during the fourteenth century. The 1355 will of the minister of S. Michele, Magister Simone de Nembro, contained several bequests for S. Michele which were to be supervised by the MIA. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1355) 132–137. On encouragement of members of S. Michele to join other companies, see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 134.

⁵⁵ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 132–133.

⁵⁶ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 135.

⁵⁷ Little remarks on the social control implicit in the statutes. Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 81.

⁵⁸ The statutes of S. Alessandro enjoin members to: *stare intente et devote omnes ad divinum officium*. Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 143.

⁵⁹ Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 127.

religious ferment in the city (just one year after the creation of the MIA), its creators attempted to shape the religious lives of its members more thoroughly than other parish confraternities established in later decades. Despite the intensity of its religious vision, its popularity declined after the thirteenth century. It survived into the fifteenth century, but was not mentioned as often as other parish confraternities in testamentary bequests, although from time to time it did attract substantial donations from testators.⁶⁰

The spiritual environment from which S. Michele grew did not outlast the confraternity either. Instead, as lay pious institutions became increasingly standardized and exclusive during the fourteenth century, the focus of most confraternities began to emphasize not only the spiritual engagement of individual members but also the associations' responsibilities as public corporate bodies. This change to the concerns of confraternities was mirrored by a shift in the composition of the institutions. If we examine the records of confraternity members' activities during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, we find that there were limits placed on some members' involvement in confraternities during that period.

Confraternity membership

The MIA was the largest confraternity in Bergamo, drawing members from throughout the city and outlying areas. It is also the company with the best-kept archive in the city, and as a result it will be the focus of the next sections of this chapter. Wherever possible I also compare the experience of MIA members with those in other confraternities in the city and diocese.⁶¹

Within the MIA, an early desire for a homogeneous membership divided only along gender lines (as articulated in the company's statutes) soon gave way to a more complex hierarchy within the confraternity. Increasingly during the fourteenth century, many men and

⁶⁰ Such as the bequest of 150 *lire* from Bonomus quondam Michaelis de Taluno in 1374. See ASBg, Notarile, M. Zampaila, busta 89, 130. For other acts concerning the confraternity of S. Michele, see ASBg, Notarile, B. Vianova, busta 135, 73 and M. Zampaila, busta 90, 174–175, and busta 91, 133.

⁶¹ The rich holdings in the MIA's archive for the thirteenth and fourteenth century can be searched on the website of the Biblioteca Civica 'Angelo Mai': www.bibliotecamai.org

all women found themselves isolated from the majority of the confraternity's business. At the same time, gender and social distinctions had always existed within the MIA. From the beginning, the statutes separated members into two groups: brothers (*fratres*), who were eligible to serve as officials, and the persons (*persone*) of the company. A variety of records also suggest that the *fratres* formed a small and exclusive group within the company from its earliest years, thus implicitly dividing the men into two groups and placing some of them in the category of *persone* along with women. The separation of the membership into three groups is borne out by the MIA's inventories from the 1270s and 1280s, which recorded the existence of three separate membership registers, one for the *fratres* (described as *fratres apti et fideles et aprobati fraternitatis suprascripti consorci*), another for the men (*homines fraternitatis et societatis suprascripti consorci Misericordie*), and a third for the women of the company.⁶² The fact that some male members were known as "brothers," while others were merely "men" or "persons," implied a stronger tie among the former than the latter group. The gap between these two groups became larger during the later thirteenth century.

In the MIA's earliest years, large numbers of men attended business meetings to determine how to distribute alms received and whether to petition the city for support in the event that heirs were reluctant to give up bequests made to the MIA by their deceased relatives of the MIA. At one of these meetings in 1282 a cellarer noted "almost two hundred" members had attended, suggesting that both *fratres* and other men participated in these meetings.⁶³ But a few decades later, the active involvement of many male members as described above had given way to a more complex hierarchy in which the officials stood apart from and above the rest of the membership. In the fourteenth century, officials gradually took over all decision-making within the company. They held meetings which took place more frequently, sometimes three times a week, which enabled them to deal with several items of business in a short period.⁶⁴ For

⁶² Only the women's list is extant. For an inventory describing the three separate registers, see BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 12v.

⁶³ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 15v.

⁶⁴ Officials planned to meet on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays each week. BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 9v. This plan was not always successful, and in 1363 and 1364 sometimes a week went by without a meeting taking place.

instance, in one week in 1363, the minister, cellarers, and several councillors (*credendari*) of the MIA discussed more than ten cases, ranging from a dispute regarding a testamentary bequest to determining how much money to give a poor girl as a dowry.⁶⁵ Although this streamlining of its work helped make the confraternity's charitable activities more efficient, at the same time it helped create a business class of male officials which was distinct from the plurality of male and female members.

The emerging exclusive status of officials in the MIA was also mirrored by the way in which a small group of men began to occupy official positions in the company over and over again, signalling the concentration of power in the hands of a small group. By the mid-fourteenth century, more than ten percent of officials in the MIA served the company four times or more during their lives. Furthermore, by the end of the century, the sons of officials often occupied similar positions of power to their fathers within the company.⁶⁶ As well, the men who made up this small group of officials were frequently the same ones who served other civic associations.⁶⁷ Some of those who served the MIA as officials also took advantage of their experience in the confraternity to move into similar positions of authority in civic government. During the MIA's first decades, some individuals moved from the minister's position to official roles in the commune.⁶⁸ Others served as officials of their local neighborhood associations.⁶⁹ Finally, some officials served as tax farmers for the

⁶⁵ BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 1v and 2v.

⁶⁶ Records of the elections of officials for the period between 1265 and 1299 are found in BCBg, MIA archivio 718, while for the years between 1327 and 1359 records can be found in ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, buste 5–14. For the later fourteenth century, see records in ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, buste 117 a/b and 118 a/b.

⁶⁷ On similar situations in Rieti, see Brentano, *A New World in a Small Place*, 29.

⁶⁸ Zilius de Credario was minister of the MIA in 1285 and then a communal councillor in 1288. See BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 88r and MIA archivio 912. Bertolameus de Curnasco was MIA minister in 1297 and 1301, and then a consul of justice in 1305, as was former minister Antonius de Poma. See BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 284r and MIA perg. 7039 and 10 375. For a 1359 record naming MIA officials as members of a civic council, see BCBg, PCB 4132.

⁶⁹ These included Gerardus Soyarius, the notary, who was an official of the neighborhood association of S. Eufemia in the 1350s. BCBg, MIA archivio 553, 141v. Other officials served in the associations of S. Stefano and S. Alessandro in Colonna. BCBg MIA perg. 4039 and ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 6 (1330–34) 57 and busta 9 (1344–46) 93.

commune, paying the civic government in return for the right to collect taxes within the city and region.⁷⁰

In order to determine whether this change in the status of MIA officials represented an increasingly rigid hierarchical organization within the confraternity, we need to assess the extent to which the network of officials was open to new members from among the *persone* of the company. During the fourteenth century, the exclusivity of the officials of the MIA was reinforced in part through the aforementioned election of sons of the confraternity's officers to official positions. By the later decades of the century it was not uncommon for the sons of those officials who served the company most frequently to themselves serve as officials more than once.⁷¹ Fragments of other evidence also allude to MIA officials becoming a social kinship network in this period. In the 1380s, the confraternity awarded a scholarship originally intended for needy scholars to the sons of its officials, including its notary Iohannes Fanconi. In their deliberations concerning scholarship, the officials noted that their choice was shaped by "the loyalty" (*fidelitatem*) that their officials had shown for the company.⁷² Thus, by the late fourteenth century, the official ranks of the company became a kind of social clan, bound by ties of loyalty to the confraternity.

The benefits of serving as an official of the MIA could include not only membership in an exclusive social club, but also financial perks such as favorable prices for property. During the fourteenth century some brothers of the MIA entered into financial transactions with the company, and apparently profitted from their experience within the institution. Such personal financial involvement, or "self-dealing" by officials in confraternities, might result in them operating as financial shelters for the benefit of officials and select members rather

⁷⁰ Such as Leoninus de Brembate who collected the tax on bread in 1347 and wine in 1355. BCBg, MIA perg. 6432. In 1327 the sometime MIA official Lanfrancus de Antea paid Azzo Visconti 3500 florins for the control of Bergamo's mills for a ten-year period. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 6 (1326–30) 102–103.

⁷¹ I have identified twelve sons of men who themselves served the MIA as officials three or more times as officials who also served the confraternity multiple times. Two of the most prominent sons of officials were Petrus, the son of Alberico da Rosciate, who stepped in to serve as minister after his father's death in 1360, and Iohannes, son of the company's notary Gerardus Soyarius, who served as notary after his father's death in 1361. See his register in ASBg, Notarile, Iohannes fq Gerardi Soyarius, busta 25.

⁷² BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 48r.

than for the community at large.⁷³ This possibility was even more likely in an institution in which individuals were elected to the same positions repeatedly. Confraternities and civic governments throughout Italy worried about self-dealing; so much so that in Bologna and Venice during the sixteenth century companies passed rules prohibiting officials from engaging in property sales to confraternities.⁷⁴ In Bergamo, most self-dealing transactions involved the confraternity renting or selling property to officials at a discount. For instance, Leoninus de Brembate, a MIA official in the 1350s, rented four pieces of property from the confraternity, including a house, two plots of arable land and a mill. The combined rent for all of the properties was 24 *lire* annually. This was significantly lower than rents the confraternity collected from others for similar properties. It often rented one piece of arable land and a house for more than 20 *lire* per year.⁷⁵ The MIA also sold land at discounted prices to its officials, such as a property in the neighborhood of Borgo Canale which the confraternity sold to its longtime notary, Gerardus Soyarius, in 1345 for 31 *lire*, almost ten *lire* less than the price the former owner had paid for it eleven years before.⁷⁶ Ultimately, officials' involvement in financial transactions with the MIA reflected a growing distinction between them and the rest of the company's members. Officials enjoyed special privileges within the confraternity which were not available to others.

During the fourteenth century, the MIA did not identify the election of officials' sons to positions within the confraternity, or officials' self-dealing within the company, as troublesome issues. At the end of the century, however, perhaps motivated by reforms within the ecclesiastical sphere (including reforms to confraternity-run hospitals, as we shall see), the MIA began a campaign of self-reform, and explicitly addressed the issue of kinship ties and the status of officials as a closed group. A 1394 amendment of its statutes warned that

⁷³ Nicholas Terpstra comments on the same problem in Bologna. Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna*, 166–170.

⁷⁴ On Venice, see Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice*, 115.

⁷⁵ See, for instance, the property transaction between two MIA officials in 1349, when one paid the other 11 *lire* for a half-year's rent on a piece of land with a house on it. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–50) 10.

⁷⁶ BCBg, MIA perg. 4239. The land may also have been provided in lieu of his salary, which totalled 20 *lire* per year. BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, and MIA archivio 715, 20r.

“no councillor can elect himself or those who elected him or his father, sons, or brothers, nor anyone else from his family so that those who will be ministers or councillors or cellarers for one year . . . will be taken from the entire population and among the good men of Bergamo.”⁷⁷ In the same statutes, the MIA included a statement about the need to announce potential sales or other transfers of land at least four times through the city and outlying areas before they took place. Such announcements were intended to “take away all scandal.”⁷⁸ Both of these reforms suggest that the MIA was concerned with presenting itself as a transparent, inclusive organization.

Despite the MIA’s 1394 attempt to change the culture of exclusivity within the confraternity, that culture was well-entrenched within the company by the late fourteenth century. The division of the MIA into distinct groups, with officials placed above other members, both male and female, was reflected in the increasingly-frequent selection of ministers of high social status after 1340.⁷⁹ The careers of two ministers of the MIA during the first half of the fourteenth century are illustrative of this change. The first, Iohannes de Ulivenis, served as minister twenty times between 1300 and 1340, while the second, Alberico da Rosciate, held the post continuously between 1345 and 1360. While their periods of service were similarly long, the men’s backgrounds and social positions were quite distinct from each other. Iohannes was a local notary, a well-established member of the community, but neither wealthy nor exceptionally powerful. Alberico, on the other hand, was a university-educated jurist whose legal writing was known throughout Europe, and who held considerable civic authority through his work as a judge and ambassador to the papal court. The differences in the men’s backgrounds reveal the extent to which the MIA began to prize high-status leaders in the mid-fourteenth century. Ironically, the confraternity’s emphasis on the importance of the high status of its later ministers was not always

⁷⁷ Cited in Locatelli, “L’Istruzione in Bergamo e la Misericordia Maggiore,” *Bergomum* 6 (1911) 35–36.

⁷⁸ BCBg, MIA archivio 937, 15r.

⁷⁹ Increasingly-rigid social hierarchies within confraternities were also visible in other parts of the peninsula. James Banker has found that by the end of the fourteenth century the diverse social backgrounds of officials in the San Sepolocran confraternity of San Bartolomeo gave way to a model of officials drawn from the elite of the town, so that “by 1390 the fraternity was indistinguishable from the communal government.” Banker, *Death in the Community*, 107.

shared by those leaders. In a reflection of the tensions between social realities and pious ideals which characterized confraternal life, Alberico da Rosciate, the most powerful member in the MIA's history, underwent a religious conversion during his tenure as minister, and ended his life in a monastery, asking to be given a pauper's burial.

In the early years of the fourteenth century the MIA seemed content to be led by men whose social status and wealth placed them in the middle ranks of Bergamasque society. The aforementioned Iohannes de Ulivenis, who had served as a councillor of the confraternity several times in the 1290s, first became its minister in 1300, and was either minister or held another official rank every year until his death in 1340.⁸⁰ Iohannes' involvement in the MIA resembled that of many other men at that time. Like many of his counterparts, Iohannes served not only the MIA but also other pious associations in Bergamo, including the *Carcerati* and the parish confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna.⁸¹ Furthermore, Iohannes served in the civic government from time to time. Most notably, in 1317 he was a member of a committee of "wise men" which drew up peace agreements between factions led by the most powerful family clans in the city.⁸² Iohannes' family was also heavily involved in the confraternity. Both his wife and mother also became members of the MIA.⁸³

During the period when Iohannes served as minister of the MIA, the company began to change its view of this role, seeking to place him above other officials and members. To this end, in 1336, the councillors of the confraternity agreed that Iohannes should be given lodgings in the MIA's headquarters as well as food from its stores. He was also provided with a committee made up of between four and six men to act as his personal councillors, who assisted him in carrying out the business of the confraternity.⁸⁴ This offer may have been intended to support the minister in the increasing burden of his duties and also to draw the attention of citizens to the similarities

⁸⁰ There are several lacunae in the notarial registers containing the confraternity's election records, but we know that Iohannes was minister in 1300, 1302–1306, 1308, 1317, 1319, 1321, 1327–1331, 1333, and 1336–1340. He was a cellarer of the confraternity in 1298, 1301, 1305, 1307, 1332, and 1335, suggesting that each year in that forty-year span he served as either minister or cellarer.

⁸¹ BCBg, AB 394 and ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 6 (1330–34) 57.

⁸² BCBg, MAB 36.

⁸³ BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 21v.

⁸⁴ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1336–40) 16.

between the minister and the *podestà* of the city. The *podestà*, like the minister, also surrounded himself with a household and ate and drank in seclusion.⁸⁵

Iohannes' willingness to serve repeatedly as an official, combined with the administrative experience he acquired during his years in the company, probably made him an attractive choice as minister during a period in which the MIA's patrimony and civic status was growing and it required officials with increasing expertise as administrators. However, although he became an important figure within the confraternity, Iohannes was still of the same status as other officials. He was certainly no wealthier than other officials; the estate he left on his death was no larger than that of many other members of the MIA, and contained the same type and size of bequests to pious groups and family members as many other testaments of the day.⁸⁶

After Iohannes died, the MIA continued to select ministers who were not only experienced administrators, but who also were more closely linked to ecclesiastical and civic power structures than Iohannes and his predecessors had been. This shift marked a change not only in the confraternity, but also in lay pious culture, as elite lay men's piety became more closely linked to both secular and ecclesiastical authority. In the 1340s, the MIA began to cultivate closer ties with civic authorities, including the Church, civic government, and the educated elite. In 1343, a local priest became one of the first clerics to act as minister of the company, and for the first time the confraternity also began to use the services of its *patronus*, the cleric whose role had been set down in the founding statutes but who had seldom, if ever, been called upon.⁸⁷ Then in 1345, the MIA elected Alberico da Rosciate as its minister and retained him in this position until his death in 1360. If Iohannes de Ulivenis had embodied the MIA's sense of itself as a lay organization built by its members who were men of middling status in the city, the choice of Alberico signalled the company's ambivalence with that identity. With Alberico as minister the MIA began to present itself as a developing civic power with elite status. His selection for this position also reflected a growing

⁸⁵ Daniel Waley, *The Italian City-Republics* (New York: Longman, 1988) 42.

⁸⁶ For the will, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 5–7.

⁸⁷ The minister was Pre Bonaventure de Roetta, priest of S. Giovanni Evangeliste. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1343), 12–13.

stratification within the ranks of the confraternity, as he was certainly the richest and probably the best-educated man in the company.

Alberico da Rosciate was an important figure within government and the church both in Bergamo and on the Italian peninsula during the fourteenth century. Born around 1290, he studied law at Padua, and then returned to Bergamo, where he served as a civic official and judge, helping to reformulate the civic statutes of 1331 and 1333.⁸⁸ He was also Bergamo's ambassador to the papal court between 1335 and 1340, travelling to Avignon in 1340 to ask the Pope to lift the interdict that had been placed on the city.⁸⁹ As a legal scholar, he wrote texts including a *Dictionarium iuris tam civilis quam canonici* (likely completed before 1350).⁹⁰ Before he became its minister, Alberico had a long-standing connection to the MIA; he sometimes served as a witness to transactions involving the confraternity, and in 1330 he made a large donation of grain to the MIA to be given to the confraternity annually in perpetuity.⁹¹

Soon after Alberico's election as minister of the MIA in 1345, it became clear that his tenure would usher in structural changes for the confraternity. For example, although Iohannes de Ulivenis had been provided with a group of counsellors to assist him in completing his work, the MIA favored Alberico with the creation of a separate position of *coadiutor ministri*, who would have the same authority as the minister during times when he was absent.⁹² The creation of this post suggests that the MIA was comfortable with and even encouraged Alberico's continuing involvement in his other civic and intellectual pursuits. A close reading of several redactions of Alberico's will between 1345 and 1360 reveals, however, that despite his reputation as a powerful civic figure, Alberico focused increasingly on the state of his own soul during his years in the MIA.

⁸⁸ For more on these activities, see Claudia Storti Storchi, ed. *Lo Statuto di Bergamo del 1331* (Milano, 1986); BCBg, AAB 225, Vol. 3, 11, and Belotti, *Storia di Bergamo e dei Bergamaschi*, Vol. 2, 410, as well as the entry on Alberico da Rosciate in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 1 (Rome, 1960) 656–657. Also see Storti Storchi, *Diritto e Istituzioni a Bergamo*, 364–371.

⁸⁹ The interdict was the result of the Visconti's disagreements with the papacy. See Dentella, *I Vescovi di Bergamo*, 252.

⁹⁰ G. Cremaschi, "Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate," *Bergomum* (1956) 54.

⁹¹ The donation comprised 13 bushels of millet annually. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 6 (1326–30) 120–121.

⁹² ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 11 (1350–52) 236–237.

The first two wills Alberico created, in 1345 and 1347, emphasized his personal wealth and his concern for the physical needs of his family.⁹³ In both documents, Alberico named his five sons his universal heirs, dividing more than one hundred different pieces of land among them. Alberico also provided dowries of three hundred *lire* for each of his three daughters. His wife Anexia was to be supported by his estate during her life, and he stipulated that she could have access to his houses both inside and outside the city. Alberico also possessed a substantial library, and his books figure prominently in both wills from this decade, as he listed them and named those who would receive them after his death.⁹⁴

In these first two wills, Alberico's concern for the state of his soul mirrored that of his wealthy contemporaries in Bergamo. For instance, he sought to connect his spiritual needs with those of his family; in the 1345 testament, he named his burial site as the parish church of S. Pancrazio, his own parish and the site of his family's tomb. Other pious bequests contained in the two early wills were similar to those left by other citizens, including men and women who were not as well off as Alberico. He left 20 *lire* to the poor, and 50 *lire* for the MIA to buy a piece of property. None of these bequests matched the value of his legacies for family members, which were worth several hundred or even a thousand *lire* each.

In contrast to his first two wills, with their conventional pious bequests and their long lists of property bequests to his family, Alberico's growing personal piety during the 1350s came to color his subsequent testamentary bequests. He created three wills during that decade in which the bequests revealed his growing involvement in religious life, both through the MIA and other civic religious associations. In April, 1348 Alberico made an *inter vivos* donation of property to his sons, reserving the usufruct of the property to himself during his lifetime.⁹⁵ Having satisfied his family obligations with this

⁹³ For these wills, see Cremaschi, "Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate," 77–93 and 93–102.

⁹⁴ For a list of the books, which included law texts, religious texts, classical works, and two medical texts, see Cremaschi, "Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate," 98–101.

⁹⁵ For the lists of these donations, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1346–1348) 226–232 and busta 9 (1347–48) 227–246, created by the notary Tomaxius de Curteregia, and 247–256, in Gerardus Soyarius's hand.

donation, he could use his testament to articulate his religious needs more thoroughly.

The increasing significance of religiosity in Alberico's life is attested to by the changing nature of the *incipits* of his wills. In the 1350 version of his testament, he invoked the names of Christ, the Virgin, and the Apostles, but for the first time he described these figures as "the special advocates of the testator."⁹⁶ This phrase was elaborated in the next two versions of the will. In 1358 he added Francis to his list of advocates.⁹⁷ In 1360, to these names was added that of Pietro Celestine, the visionary hermit who had served unhappily and unsuccessfully as Pope Celestine V for several months in 1294, abdicating at the behest of Benedetto Caetani, the cardinal who became Boniface VIII, his successor.⁹⁸ The allusions to Francis and to Pietro Celestine were probably intended to evoke the idea of an eremitical existence taking precedence over office-holding and other worldly pursuits, although the well-known "pliability" of Celestine as pope (one commentator later stated that he had issued blank bulls for others to fill in) did not make the comparison as powerful as Alberico had perhaps intended it to be.⁹⁹

Still, through these *incipits* to his testaments, Alberico gradually articulated a vision of himself as someone who had spurned the glory of political office in favour of a simple spiritual existence. As he presented himself in this guise, the MIA also began to occupy a more central place in these wills. In 1358, Alberico named the MIA as his universal heir, explaining this change by stating that he had served *multis annis* as its minister.¹⁰⁰ He repeated this statement in the final redaction of the will, one version of which was written in the first person. There he stated that the MIA, *cuius annis plurimis fui minister*, was to be his universal heir.¹⁰¹

Alberico's instructions about his burial in these final redactions of the will also suggest that he espoused a more intensely personal piety at the end of his life. As we have seen, in his earlier wills he had

⁹⁶ Cremaschi, "Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate," 71.

⁹⁷ Cremaschi, "Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate," 66.

⁹⁸ Cremaschi, "Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate," 60.

⁹⁹ On Celestine, see Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon: A Social History of Thirteenth Century Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 143.

¹⁰⁰ Cremaschi, "Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate," 66.

¹⁰¹ Cremaschi, "Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate," 61.

asked to be buried in the family tomb. By the 1350s, these instructions had become more detailed, and his funeral ceremony itself was to be more austere. While previously he had asked for 20 *lire* to be spent on his funeral clothing, by 1350 he wished to be buried with no such ceremony, stating instead that “naked he had come from his mother’s womb, and naked he would return . . .”¹⁰² In 1358 he further emphasized this need for piety and austerity at his funeral. First, he selected a new burial site, this time in the monastery of S. Nicolo de Plorzano, the home of the Celestine monks, in which he had ordered the construction of a chapel. He also elaborated his instructions for the preparation of his body, stating that he wished his wife to prepare his body for burial in a brown robe, presumably the habit of the order.¹⁰³

The most personal expression of Alberico’s piety is found in the last redaction of his will, dated 8 September, 1360. Alberico wrote this version himself, as he lay dying in a room in the Celestine monastery, where he lived for some years before his death.¹⁰⁴ The fact that Alberico appears to have gone to live in the monastery of the Celestines, although his wife remained in their house in Bergamo, further suggests that he had undergone a religious conversion during his years as the MIA’s minister. We have seen that during the late 1350s he had constructed a chapel in the monastery, and in the final redaction of his will, he left the Celestines a legacy of up to 300 gold florins to complete the work he had begun.¹⁰⁵ Another indication of the further deepening of his personal piety was the fact that in this final version of his testament Alberico asked to be buried at the Celestine monastery *sine vestibus et sumptibus supervacuis*, that is without the luxurious clothing or other features of a wealthy man’s

¹⁰² Cremaschi, “Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate,” 75.

¹⁰³ He stated: *item elegit sibi sepulcrum in monasterio sancti Nicolay de Plorzano ordinis Celestinorum, et in sepulcro quod construi fecit in capella ibidem per ipsum ordinata et edificata, et prohibuit corpus suum indui nisi uno cilicio, et sicut nudus egressus est de utero matris, ita revertatur, et prohibuit eciam alligari, indui pro funere suo, excepta uxore sua, quia indui voluit una veste bruna, sicut moris est.* Cremaschi, “Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate,” 69.

¹⁰⁴ An argument first advanced by Cremaschi, “Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate,” 7. Cremaschi also suggests that Alberico had lived with the Celestines since at least 1352. He was certainly living there in 1355, when he made a donation to the MIA in a notarial act created in his room in the monastery. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 11 (1355) 93.

¹⁰⁵ Cremaschi, “Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate,” 64.

funeral. Instead, he asked for his body to be covered with the cloth the MIA used to cover the bodies of the poor at their funerals.¹⁰⁶

What did the confluence of personal piety and civic power that marked Alberico's tenure as minister signify about the place of the MIA in Bergamasque society in the mid-fourteenth century? Early studies of confraternities presented the institutions as oases of peace from the social and political conflicts of late medieval Italian cities.¹⁰⁷ More recently, however, scholars have questioned this claim, asserting instead that confraternities, like other public institutions of their time and place, could embody the conflicts common in other institutions of the late medieval city.¹⁰⁸ Alberico's activities while minister of the MIA suggest that confraternities embodied *both* of these notions, simultaneously reflecting *and* challenging the social order. By selecting a high-status man like Alberico, the MIA made its own claims to elite status plain to others in the city, but through the pious language and actions that he took at the end of his life, Alberico showed that during his long term as minister of the confraternity he had come to a religious conversion, and that he was not concerned about the trappings of power which accompanied that role. Ultimately, therefore, Alberico's experience in the MIA highlights the tensions that were present in mid-fourteenth century confraternal life, as the associations sat uneasily between the realm of secular civic authority and the growing realm of intense personal piety.

While his conversion brought the complexity of the MIA's status as a civic power and religious organization to the fore, Alberico's personal piety did not alter the direction of the confraternity's administration. In the years after Alberico's death, the MIA continued to elect ministers whose secular or ecclesiastical status distinguished them from the rest of the officials and membership of the confraternity. Alberico's son Petrus, a cleric trained in law, followed him as minister in 1361. Then clerics began to fill the position. The canon Graciolus de S. Gervasio served as minister in 1364, and in the 1380s two priests, Bertulimus de la Piperata and Antonius de Beatis,

¹⁰⁶ Cremaschi, "Contributo all biografia di Alberico da Rosciate," 33 and 62.

¹⁰⁷ See, for instance, Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood* and Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York and Toronto: Academic Press, 1980).

¹⁰⁸ Fisk Rondeau, "Homosexuality and Civic (Dis)order," in Terpstra, ed. *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*, 43.

took the role.¹⁰⁹ In the same decade, a *comites palatinum* and judge, Salvinus de S. Gallo, was elected to the position.¹¹⁰ At the end of the century, the minister was Antonius de Barillis, a judge, who also helped lead the processions of the white-robed penitents known as the *Bianchi* in 1399.¹¹¹ The identities of the confraternity's ministers as selected over the course of the fourteenth century suggests that despite the reforms of 1394, the MIA retained a vision of its highest officials as set apart from the rest of the confraternity. A final vignette illustrates the confraternity's ongoing emphasis on the high status of its officials. At a 1396 meeting of the confraternity, five of the 55 men in attendance were identified by the company's notary as judges (*iudex*).¹¹²

Esserci and Valere: *Women in the MIA*

During the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, almost two thousand women joined the MIA. We have more information about them than we do about their male counterparts due to the existence of an extant female matriculation list for the confraternity dated between 1265 and 1339. Giovanna Casagrande has argued that women such as these members of the MIA were "suspended between *esserci* and *valere*, between presence and real worth."¹¹³ For Casagrande, the presence of women in confraternal matriculation lists in itself means little, it is rather their absence within the ranks of officials and other active members that is significant. But for the women who joined the MIA, simply entering their names in the matriculation list guaranteed them the same spiritual benefits as other members. Therefore, for these women, the act of joining the confraternity was of "real worth." But at the same time, an analysis of women's patterns of joining the MIA suggests that women accepted that they

¹⁰⁹ BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 9r and 24r, and ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 40.

¹¹⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 413.

¹¹¹ Castello Castelli, 'Chronicon Bergomense Guelpho-Ghibellinum', *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, Tom. XVI, part. 3-4, 74 and 95.

¹¹² BCBg, MIA archivio 937, 23v.

¹¹³ Casagrande, "Confraternities and Lay Female Religiosity," in Terpstra, ed. *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*, 65.

were less socially-significant members of the confraternity than were their male counterparts.

The female matriculation list of the MIA, which names more than 1700 women who joined the MIA in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is a valuable source for documenting the continuing presence of women within a confraternity.¹¹⁴ The register, which lists the names of female members and the names of their husbands or fathers by city neighborhood, is important in several ways. First, the list allows us to analyze the social status of female confraternity members; such an analysis suggests that members were normally from the upper ranks of Bergamasque society. Nearly half of the married women identified themselves with a first name and a patronymic or toponymic, a common marker of middling or higher status in the later Middle Ages. Less than ten per cent of the women gave no second name at all, indicating that only a relatively small group of female members were of the lowest social status. Continued analysis of the list also provides information about the links between women and men in the confraternity. By comparing fragmentary information about the identity of male members with the names of women listed, we discover that at the end of the thirteenth century between one quarter and one third of known male members of the MIA were married to women whose names appear on the female membership list.¹¹⁵ Therefore, we can safely suggest that a significant proportion of all male MIA members were married to women who were also members of the company.

This focus on the connection between women and men, including husbands and fathers, on the matriculation list raises the question, first, about the extent to which married couples joined the confraternity together. Further examination indicates that although women were probably prompted to join the MIA by their husbands, husbands and wives did not always become confraternity members at the same time. The story of the notary Gerardus Soyarius and his wife Zoanna, a prominent couple in Bergamo, provides an example of the differing connections which husbands and wives created

¹¹⁴ Maria Teresa Brolis suggests that evidence of various notaries' hands in the list supports the claim that most of the list was completed before a period of civic violence in 1296. See *La Matricola Femminile della Misericordia di Bergamo*, LI.

¹¹⁵ Names of male members are scattered throughout BCBg, MIA archivio 718.

with the MIA. Gerardus married Zoanna, the daughter of Albertus Pectenarius, a long-time official of the confraternity, in 1324.¹¹⁶ By the 1330s Gerardus had become a member of the confraternity and the MIA's chief notary. He was also elected an official of the MIA in 1356. At his death in 1361, his son Iohannes became the confraternity's notary. It is very likely that Gerardus' marriage to Zoanna helped cement the long-lasting bond between notary and confraternity, so tempting us to paint Zoanna solely as the instrument of her husband's connection to the confraternity. However, the membership list records that Zoanna was not even a member of the MIA when her husband joined it. She matriculated in the confraternity only in September of 1334, years after her husband joined the company and after her father had already served as a confraternity official five times.¹¹⁷ Her decision to join the confraternity long after her husband and father had become involved with it was not unusual. Benvenuta, wife of MIA official Marcus de Drosio, became a member in 1331, when her husband had already held two official positions in it. Domina Pola de Ulivenis, who was married to the aforementioned Iohannes de Ulivenis, probably did not join the company until after 1300, despite her husband's longstanding close ties with the MIA from at least 1296.¹¹⁸ The gap between husbands' and wives' decisions to join the MIA also reflected the experience of lay people in other parts of the peninsula. In San Sepolcro, for instance, few husbands and wives joined the confraternity of San Bartolomeo at the same time during the 1270s.¹¹⁹

While they did not necessarily join the MIA alongside their husbands, many women joined the company at the same time as other women in their households. Almost one fifth of the women named in the matriculation list were registered as members at the same time as one or more of their female relatives. Sometimes mothers and daughters enrolled together, as did Benvenuta, the wife of Petinus Ramelli, and her daughter Catarina, who joined the MIA in October of 1339; similarly, domina Laurencia, the wife of Iohannes de Lodi,

¹¹⁶ BCBg, MIA perg. 4194.

¹¹⁷ BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 11r.

¹¹⁸ This is suggested by the hand in which her name was entered in the matriculation list. See Brolis, *La Matricola Femminile della Misericordia di Bergamo*, 55.

¹¹⁹ James Banker, *Death in the Community*, 70.

joined the company with her daughter.¹²⁰ Sisters also joined the confraternity together. Caracosa, Richadona and Alberta, daughters of Bertolomeus Adobbi, all became members of the MIA at the same time.¹²¹ Occasionally, even women and their servants enlisted in the confraternity at the same time. Domina Otta de Petergallis and her servant Ottabella, and domina Zillia de Petergallis and her servant Benvenuta all joined together.¹²²

The unexpected example of female servants and their female employers joining the MIA together suggests that social kinship ties with other women prompted some women to become members of the confraternity. In fact, it was not uncommon for whole households of women to join the MIA. In the case of the women of the Petergallis clan, four other female members of the group entered the confraternity at the same time as the four women discussed above.¹²³ Again another instance in which several women in a household became members of the MIA involved the family of Attazius Marini, when Attazius' wife Caracossa, their daughter Speralda, his mother Laurentia, his sister Madonina, and their servant domina Bona de Grasolvo all joined the MIA together.¹²⁴ Religious women, too, joined the confraternity in groups. The register names more than twenty female members of several local religious orders who became members of the MIA together. Nine nuns and three *conversae* from the convent of Valle Marine, and seven nuns and one *conversa* from the convent dedicated to S. Grata joined it at the same time.¹²⁵ Two *sorores penitencie* from the *vicinia* of SS. Agata e Arena, and four sisters of the hospital of S. Caterina, located in the *vicinia* of

¹²⁰ Other examples of mothers and daughters joining together included Pax, wife of the Misericordia official Iohannes de Redona and her daughter Margarita. Bona, wife of Petrus Marezonio and her daughter Anexia also joined the Misericordia at the same time, as did domina Gisla, widow of Guillelmus de Sorlascho and her daughter-in-law domina Benvenuta. BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 12r, 18r, 23r.

¹²¹ Several other sisters joined the confraternity together, including Richadona and Librina, daughters of the notary Bergaminus de Marchisis, BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 5r and 6v.

¹²² In both cases the women's names immediately follow each other. BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 13v and 10r.

¹²³ BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 13r/v.

¹²⁴ As previously noted, the women's names follow each other on the list and were entered in the same hand. BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 9r.

¹²⁵ BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 2r and 3v.

S. Alessandro della Croce, also became members of the confraternity contemporaneously.¹²⁶

The fact that female social kinship networks drew women into the MIA suggests that women did not see themselves as autonomous participants in confraternal activities. By joining the MIA alongside all of the other women in their household or religious order, women implicitly acknowledged that they had no individual role to play in the confraternity. In addition, it can be argued that women such as Zoanna, the wife of a MIA notary and daughter of a MIA official, who joined the confraternity after her male relatives, understood that their own participation in the confraternity was less important than that of their husbands, fathers, and brothers and accepted their lesser role in it. But at the same time, women continued to seek out spiritual assistance from the MIA. We shall examine women's experiences within the confraternity in more detail in subsequent chapters.

The MIA and small confraternities in Bergamo

The extensive sources for the history of the MIA in late medieval Bergamo reflect the gradual centralization of confraternal structures in that city during the fourteenth century. In its relations with other confraternities in the city and diocese, the MIA also acted as a central authority, gathering smaller confraternities into its orbit. As we noted in the first section of this chapter, most of the smaller confraternities in Bergamo were organized around individual parishes.¹²⁷ Parish confraternities were separate from the parish itself. Membership in them was restricted to certain inhabitants of the parish (usually

¹²⁶ BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 5r and 18r.

¹²⁷ Fragmentary sources for the history of parish confraternities are scattered throughout the notarial protocols held in the Archivio di Stato of Bergamo. These are mainly records of property donations and sales to the confraternities. We know little else about their activities in the city. For records of the confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna, see ASBg, Notarile, V. da Poma, busta 98 (1367–71) 34; also busta 114 (1376) 479–489. For the consorzio of S. Leonardo, which apparently united with S. Alessandro in Colonna in the later fourteenth century, see especially ASBg, Notarile, L. Aliprandi, busta 112 (1374) 44–49 and (1374–76) 12–14, 17, 20–23, 40–42, 58, 109–111, 140, 151–152, 174–175, 185–186 and 250–290. For S. Alessandro della Croce, see V. da Poma, busta 98 (1375–84) 409–12 and F. Ventraria, busta 29c (1397–98) 88–89.

only men). And as we shall see, not only confraternity officials but also other citizens increasingly perceived the smaller companies as offshoots or “cells” of the larger association in the fourteenth century.¹²⁸

The MIA's authority over smaller confraternities in Bergamo was articulated in several ways. We saw earlier that statutes of smaller companies formed after the MIA sometimes used the language of the MIA's rule to establish their own expectations for members. A more direct example of the MIA's control of smaller confraternities was the fact that MIA officials also governed smaller confraternities. For example, several officials of confraternities from the parishes of S. Pancrazio, S. Giovanni dell'Ospedale, S. Alessandro della Croce, and S. Alessandro in Colonna were also officials of the MIA during the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹²⁹ On a few occasions the records show that important officials of the MIA also acted as heads of the smaller confraternities, suggesting that the MIA directly oversaw the administration of some confraternities. For instance, in 1294, Iohannes de Redona served as the minister of both the MIA and the confraternity of S. Alessandro della Croce.¹³⁰ Similarly, in 1325 the MIA's cellarer, Iacobus de Briolo, was also the minister of the *Carcerati*, while Iohannes de Ulivenis served simultaneously as minister of the MIA and a syndic or proctor of the *Carcerati* in 1302.¹³¹

When small confraternities encountered financial troubles during the fourteenth century, they turned to the MIA to administer them. In 1305 the officials of the congregation of S. Sepulcro di Astino, the oldest documented confraternity in the diocese, handed over administration of their company to the MIA. Its officials stated that since the company had so few members it could no longer engage in charitable work, and they asked the MIA, whose officials were “good men who were capable of performing this almsgiving” to take over.¹³² The MIA did adopt the company's charitable responsibilities,

¹²⁸ Lester Little describes the confraternity of S. Michele al Pozzo Bianco in these terms. Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 61.

¹²⁹ For the officials of S. Pancrazio, see BCBg, MIA archivio 603, 2v. For the officials of S. Giovanni dell'Ospedale, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1344–46) 152. For S. Alessandro della Croce, see BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, register 1326–1328. For S. Alessandro in Colonna, see BCBg, AB 394.

¹³⁰ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 228r and 231r.

¹³¹ BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, register 1326–1328 and BCBg, AB 72, 9r. For Iohannes de Ulivenis, see BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 359r.

¹³² BCBg, MIA perg. 1683, and also see Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 103.

with the support of the bishop.¹³³ In part through such transactions, in the early fourteenth century the MIA emerged as the pre-eminent confraternity in Bergamo.

The MIA's regulatory role over other confraternities in the diocese was accepted and expanded by lay people both inside and outside the confraternity. Examples of this acceptance are found in testamentary bequests for some small confraternities in the city and diocese. In their wills, some testators required the smaller confraternities to work with the MIA in the administration of their bequests. In 1330, one such testator left a legacy to both the MIA and the parish confraternity of S. Caterina, asking that the two confraternities buy a house together and then give that house to the hospital of S. Caterina. The testator also asked the two companies to restitute usurious payments he and his mother had received, and as well he made the ministers of the two confraternities the coexecutors of his will.¹³⁴ In several other wills, testators explicitly made the MIA the regulator of smaller confraternities receiving their testamentary bequests. For instance, in 1333 a testator left a substantial legacy of 150 *lire* to a small confraternity in the village of Valotta (Vall'Alta, north-east of Bergamo), instructing the confraternity to use the money to buy property and then give the rent received from the property to the poor.¹³⁵ He did not expect the confraternity to act alone in its purchase of the land; instead, the MIA's cellarer was required to give his assent to any purchase. If the smaller confraternity did not follow the testator's instructions, the entire bequest was to be transferred to the MIA. The way the confraternity handled the bequest further underscores the regulatory and protective role that the MIA took with regard to smaller confraternities during the fourteenth century. After the death of the testator, his heirs were reluctant to give the confraternity of Vallotta the lump sum promised in the will. Instead, they agreed to give the company an annual payment of 6 *lire* and 12 *denari*.¹³⁶ The confraternity found that this payment was not large enough to allow it to buy property. As a result, the MIA made a donation of three pieces of land in a nearby territory to the

¹³³ BCBg, MIA perg. 1684. On the bishop's agreement to this transaction see Dentella, *I Vescovi di Bergamo*, 235.

¹³⁴ BCBg, MIA perg. 727.

¹³⁵ BCBg, MIA perg. 737.

¹³⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 48.

officials of the confraternity, stating that this donation would take the place of the original bequest.¹³⁷ As it accepted and encouraged a view of itself as the regulator of other confraternities in the diocese, the MIA also took on the financial responsibilities that went along with that role.

The Misericordia Maggiore and Secular Government

Confraternities embodied the patriarchal structure of late medieval society even as they espoused an ideal of the unity of all Christian souls. Patriarchy was evident in the way the companies created divisions between male and female members and relegated female (and some male) members to a lesser rank in the organizations. In their political involvement, too, Bergamo's confraternities, represented in particular by the MIA, adopted the patriarchal norms of civic society. Although its statutes established no active role for it in civic politics, the MIA became increasingly involved in political life during the fourteenth century. During the transition from communal to signorial government in the fourteenth century, the MIA altered its own governing structure. As it became more hierarchical and authoritarian, it reflected similar changes within the government. MIA officials also took an active role in enabling political change, using their charitable program to assist the new governors of the city to help smooth the path to peaceful and successful rule.

The MIA's role in politics in Bergamo reflects the argument that confraternities supported the social order, taught youthful citizens the responsibilities of public life, and served as models of self-management for other civic organizations.¹³⁸ Unlike confraternities in Florence or Bologna, which existed in conflict with local authorities, the MIA enjoyed a close relationship with Bergamasque government.¹³⁹ In its

¹³⁷ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 49–50.

¹³⁸ Bornstein, "Corporazioni Spirituali: Proprietà delle Confraternite e Pietà dei Laici," 77.

¹³⁹ Historians studying confraternal civic involvement have tended to see confraternities as vulnerable to control by government and social elites in the later Middle Ages. See, for example, Banker, *Death in the Community*, 107; Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna*, 181; Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 2 and Henderson, "Le Confraternite Religiose nella Firenze del Tardo Medioevo: Patroni Spirituali e Anche Politici?" *Ricerche Storiche*, 15 (1985) 82 and 94; also see Susan

relations with government, the MIA emulated prevailing political and social structures, providing a model of social values for the rest of the community.

During the late thirteenth century in Bergamo, political factions in the city began to destabilize the communal government.¹⁴⁰ Control of civic offices shifted between several powerful clans, including the Suardi family, later members of the Ghibelline party, and the Rivola and Bonghi, who eventually carried the banner of the Guelfs.¹⁴¹ Sporadic battles between these factions escalated into civil war and finally led to the Suardi family calling on the assistance of their fellow Ghibellines, the Visconti, who became lords of Bergamo in 1332.

The MIA's willingness to work alongside the commune greatly assisted the government during this period of instability. The government in turn extended support and privileges to the MIA which enabled the confraternity to function as their charitable arm and underscored the shared interests of the two institutions. In the last decades of the thirteenth century, donations from the commune sometimes provided more than half of the confraternity's yearly cash income. Between 1291 and 1296 the commune provided twice-yearly donations of 24 and a half *lire* each as payments of a 300 *lire* commitment made to the confraternity. In total, from 1283 to 1298, donations from the commune averaged one third of the confraternity's annual cash revenues.¹⁴² In addition, civic officials provided the MIA with tax concessions which aided the development of its almsgiving program.¹⁴³ These included the regulation of the price of

Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) esp. 74–76.

¹⁴⁰ Menant, "L' Identità Civica" in *La Storia di Bergamo: il Comune e la Signoria*, 34. Also see Storti Storch, *Diritto e Istituzioni a Bergamo*, 294 and 307.

¹⁴¹ Jörg Jarnut, "Gli inizi del comune di Bergamo," *Archivio Storico Bergamasco* 5 (1983) 207. Jarnut's history of Bergamo also contains a discussion of the rise of the commune. "Sulla via del comune," in *Bergamo 568–1098*, 143–149.

¹⁴² References for donations to the Misericordia from the commune between 1284 and 1298 are found in BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 62r, 112v, 175v, 189v, 193r, 208v, 212r, 228v, 233r, 249v, 253v, 267r, 272v, and 284v. Guiseppe Mira notes that in the fifteenth century, some flagellant confraternities in central Italy also received grants from local government. Mira, "Primi sondaggi su taluni aspetti economico-finanziari" in *Risultati e Prospettive della Ricerca sul movimento dei Disciplinati*, 242. John Henderson has also described the Florentine priors' grants of cash for alms to the confraternity of Orsanmichele in the 1320s. Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 202.

¹⁴³ See descriptions of the commune's regulation of the tax on salt for the Misericordia in ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1341–42) 84 and BCBg, MIA

salt as well as donations of salt to the MIA. Beginning in 1300, tax farmers, under the commune's orders, sold the confraternity eight bushels of salt at a favourable rate of 5 *soldi* per bushel each month and also donated four bushels of salt to them. So close was the connection between the MIA and civic government that in the late thirteenth century, members of the *popolo* stated that they would support the commune's privileges for the MIA "for the utility of the commune and for the performance of works of mercy in harmony [with the MIA]." ¹⁴⁴

The link between the MIA and the commune became more explicit in the early fourteenth century, when the commune gradually lost its autonomy and the MIA stepped in to support it. From 1307, MIA members aided it by serving as negotiators between the Suardi-led Ghibellines and the Guelfs, now led by the Rivola, Bonghi, and Colleoni families. This role gave the confraternity a new set of responsibilities as well as a higher profile in civic affairs. The MIA had not sought this function in the past; unlike many confraternities, its founding rule said nothing about the company's responsibility for civic peace. ¹⁴⁵ The MIA's developing role as peacemaker in Bergamo thus reveals not only the confraternity's defence of the commune, but also its ability to adapt to changing social and political circumstances. This flexibility would enable the confraternity to survive the political changes which transformed the city in the fourteenth century.

The relative calm of the thirteenth century in Bergamo ended in 1296, when open war broke out between the Ghibellines and the Guelfs. The war caused chaos throughout the city, and shook the authority of the commune. ¹⁴⁶ From that point on, according to

archivio 1383 bis. Copies of legal privileges received from the civic government in 1288 and 1357 are found in BCBg, MIA archivio, 912. Other legal privileges dating from 1314, 1334, and 1349 are BCBg, MIA perg. 11 449, 4990, and 5921.

¹⁴⁴ *pro evidenti utilitate comunis Pergami aprobata per omnes anzianios populi Pergami pro opere misericordie in concordia*. BCBg, MIA archivio 912.

¹⁴⁵ This is in contrast with the rules of some other confraternities on the peninsula. Jennifer Fisk Rondeau notes that most early statutes of confraternities in Italy "repeat a standard formula to the effect that the confraternity was established at least in part to promote the peace and order of the city." Fisk Rondeau, "Homosociality" in Terpstra, ed. *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*, 37.

¹⁴⁶ The violence also had a direct effect on the Misericordia, as the confraternity's desk (*scrineo*) was robbed when looters entered the choir (*goro*) of the cathedral of S. Vincenzo, where the desk stood. Along with the *libris et inscriptis* stored within it, the cellarer noted that a sum of money (26 *soldi* and 2 *denari*) had also been stolen. BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 276r.

Claudia Storti Storchi, the communal institutions became fundamentally unstable.¹⁴⁷ During this period of instability the commune turned to the MIA for help in reasserting its control of civic institutions. The MIA became involved in pacification of the factions in 1307. That year, a member of the Suardi family attacked and wounded a member of the Colleoni clan, breaking an earlier peace treaty between the two families and bringing Guelfs and Ghibellines into conflict once again.¹⁴⁸ The commune responded to this renewal of tension by creating a body of sixteen *Savi*, or ‘wise men’, to broker a peace treaty between the Rivola and Colleoni faction, and the Suardi, who were living in exile outside the city. Among the *Savi* was an official of the MIA: Iohannes de Ulivenis, who, as we know, had already served as an official of the confraternity eight times.¹⁴⁹ His appointment would raise the profile of the MIA’s role in civic affairs, as citizens would readily identify him as a representative of it.

Along with the rest of the *Savi*, the MIA, in the person of Iohannes de Ulivenis, rejected factional government and supported a return to a strong commune. The decrees of the *Savi* were granted the status of law. Their goal was to restore the authority of the commune to the city and to control noble factionalism. They also included a clarification of the relationship between the commune and the *popolo* and the provision of war damages to four of the most powerful families in the city: the Rivola, Colleoni, Bonghi, and Suardi.¹⁵⁰ Finally, members of the four families were given the responsibility of acting as “keepers of the peace.”¹⁵¹ Most importantly, however, the 1307 peace aimed at reasserting the public authority of the commune and the *popolo*, working in tandem for citizens’ interests. Individuals who “said anything against the peace” would be punished by having their tongues cut out, while those who challenged the power of the *podestà*, the *popolo* or other civic authorities would be put to death.¹⁵²

In the years after 1307 the confraternity played a fully articulated role in peace negotiations and in so doing helped support the city’s

¹⁴⁷ Storti Storchi, *Diritto e Istituzioni a Bergamo*, 313.

¹⁴⁸ BCBg, AB 385, 51v. Also cited in Storti Storchi, *Diritto e Istituzioni a Bergamo*, 315n.

¹⁴⁹ BCBg, Sala 1 N 10 2/3.

¹⁵⁰ Storti Storchi, *Diritto e Istituzioni a Bergamo*, 319–322.

¹⁵¹ BCBg, Mazzoleni, *Žibaldone di memorie riguardante Bergamo*, capitolo 25.

¹⁵² Storti Storchi, *Diritto e Istituzioni a Bergamo*, 322–323.

governing bodies. For example, when a new peace committee was formed in 1317, Iohannes de Ulivenis, at that time the minister of the confraternity, and Laurentius de Apibus, its cellarer, helped organize the council and acted as members.¹⁵³ The negotiation of the 1317 truce provided the confraternity with even greater responsibilities than it had taken on in 1307. Every month, two confraternity officials met as part of a committee formed by the *anziani* of the *popolo* to oversee the peace. The duty of this committee was to report on how to 'maintain and increase the peace and harmony of the city'.¹⁵⁴ The *anziani* were to introduce any action so identified during meetings of the general council of the commune so that the councillors might vote on it. In this way, the committee became a significant civic institution; its wishes could change the laws of the city. In addition to this role, the MIA's officials also helped choose custodians for the fortresses of the region. In the first two months after the peace the *podestà* and the *Savi* elected the custodians, but after that twelve members of the *popolo* along with twelve members of the MIA served as the electors.¹⁵⁵

Despite all of the attempts by the MIA to assist the commune, the authority of the commune gradually weakened. Then, when the Visconti became the *signori* of Bergamo in the 1330s, the confraternity supported signorial rule. By approaching the Visconti for legal privileges and by placing increasing emphasis on its authority in the community, the MIA promoted the values of signorial government even as it maintained the concern for poor relief which it had shared with the commune. The Visconti established themselves as the *signori* of most Lombard cities in the early decades of the fourteenth century. One of the notable changes they attempted was the centralization of traditional civic institutions. We have noted that after Azzone Visconti became *signore* of Bergamo in the early 1330s, he commissioned a new version of the civic statutes in which the city's *podestà* was no longer subject to the citizens but rather to the *signore*

¹⁵³ For discussion of the content of the peace agreement, see Arveno Sala, "Le Famiglie Suardi e Colleoni nei primi secoli del comune di Bergamo," *Atti del Ateneo di Bergamo* (1990) 255–276. For a later copy of the text of the agreement itself, see BCBg, MAB 36.

¹⁵⁴ BCBg, MAB 36, 2r.

¹⁵⁵ BCBg, MAB 36, 12r. No documents from the commune's archive survive to attest to the actual role which the Misericordia played in meetings after the truce was established.

himself.¹⁵⁶ The Visconti also taxed the citizens of Bergamo—and all other cities they ruled—more heavily than had previous regimes.¹⁵⁷

Even though the Visconti lords altered the shape of the political and economic order in Bergamo, like most *signori* on the peninsula they also sought a smooth transition between communal and signorial rule. To effect this, the Visconti relied in part on the MIA. Upon their assumption of power in Bergamo, they renewed several privileges the MIA had received from the commune. For instance, regular donations of salt and the sale of the commodity at a reduced rate to the confraternity continued until at least the 1360s.¹⁵⁸ In doing this they emphasized at least this one avenue of continuity between themselves and the former rulers of the city.¹⁵⁹

The extent to which the Visconti emulated traditional civic policies regarding the MIA is best illustrated by comparing the privileges extended to the confraternity by the commune in 1288 with those extended to them by the Visconti in 1357. In 1288, the commune had agreed to grant the MIA a legal privilege “for the good and advantage of the poor of the city and region of Bergamo and so that God might defend the commune from all evil and danger and maintain the perpetual peace and harmony of the commune.”¹⁶⁰ The language used underscored the idea that the alliance between the two institutions ensured not only the confraternity’s survival, but also the continuing harmony of the city itself.¹⁶¹ In 1357, the MIA approached Bernabò Visconti to enquire if he would uphold the

¹⁵⁶ Belotti, *Storia di Bergamo*, Vol. 2, 107; and Fumagalli, *Bergamo. Origini e vicende storiche del centro antico*, 147.

¹⁵⁷ Patrizia Mainoni, *Economia e Politica nelle Lombardia Medievale. Da Bergamo a Milano fra XIII e XV secolo* (Milano: Gribaudo Editore, 1994) 99.

¹⁵⁸ BCBg, AB 229, 39r.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel Bornstein remarks on how other political leaders in late medieval Italy demonstrated their legitimacy “by exercising civic control over religious life.” *The Bianchi of 1399*, 177.

¹⁶⁰ *predicta requiruntur per ministrum et canevarium et alios bonos homines ipsius Consorci Misericordie debere fieri et ordinari per comunem Pergami pro bono et utilitate pauperum civitatis et virtutis Pergami et ad hoc ut Deus deffendat comunem Pergami ab omni mallo, periculo et ipsum comunem in perpetua pace et concordia manuteneat.* For both petitions, see BCBg, MIA archivio 912 (unfoliated).

¹⁶¹ The guarantee of protection for the civic government as a consequence of the government’s support of justice and the weaker members of the community is a common theme in medieval Italian cities. For examples from Siena see William Bowsky, *A Medieval Italian Commune: Siena Under the Nine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) 287–291.

legal privileges which the commune had provided the confraternity in 1288, “humbly and reverently” requesting that he extend the MIA a privilege similar to that of 1288. In its petition the confraternity stated that its century-long tradition of assistance to the poor and the weak, as well as the fact that its officials received no salary from the confraternity’s revenues, made it an ideal candidate for such a privilege. Using language similar to the request of 1288, the officials asked in the Virgin’s name that the *podestà* and his judges ensure, as their predecessors had done, that a “summary and expedited procedure” be followed to avoid the “cavils” (*cavilacionibus*) which frequently slowed the confraternity’s attempt to recover bequests in the courts. This expedition would ensure that the MIA could focus its energies and its funds on serving the poor as it had traditionally done. The Visconti granted the confraternity’s request. Bernabò’s willingness to support the MIA was clearly an attempt to emphasize the continuity between his government and the government of the commune.

In accepting these privileges the MIA implicitly articulated its recognition of the domination of Bergamo by the Visconti. But the confraternity’s support for the Visconti also extended to making administrative changes to reflect the new social and political values the Visconti represented. From the early fourteenth century, the MIA had encouraged its ministers to remain in office for several years at a time. When the Visconti arrived in the city, the MIA also began to select ministers such as Alberico da Rosciate, whose learning and social status set him apart from the rest of the company. Ministers of the confraternity therefore more closely resembled the *signori* themselves than they did the members of the organization. It is clear that the MIA was profoundly affected by the political changes the Visconti introduced to the city. Through their alteration of their administration to reflect changing social values in the city, MIA officials instructed the confraternity’s membership about the importance of those values.

The hierarchical, centrally-organized political culture which the MIA embodied in the fourteenth century was also both shaped by and represented in the confraternity’s records, especially in the registers of the notaries who worked for the company. In its earliest years, the MIA did not work exclusively with any particular notary. By the 1320s, however, its more frequent involvement in land transactions and disputes with heirs and tenants required more involvement with notaries. Although Gerardus Soyarius was never officially

the notary of the MIA—he continued to take on other business throughout his career—he worked closely with the MIA for nearly 40 years until his death in 1361, frequently redacting documents for the confraternity at its house in the neighborhood of S. Eufemia. His copious registers contained thousands of instruments involving the MIA and so help us construct a portrait of the company's activities.¹⁶² As artifacts, the registers resemble those of other notaries of the early and mid-fourteenth century, with documents written in an extensively abbreviated style that would have made more sense to the notary than any other person. Gerardus' registers mingled records of all types of transactions involving the confraternity, from minutes of its meetings where officials were elected, to testaments or donations *inter vivos* in which individuals left small and large amounts of money or property to the confraternity. The only concessions to order in the registers were brief, heavily abbreviated marginal notes naming the individual involved in the transaction (but not the type of transaction). In later registers Gerardus also created *rubrica*, or lists of the transactions contained in the register (these do not include folio numbers to allow for easier searching of the register, although they do list the transactions in the order they occurred). Seen through these registers, the confraternity emerges as a busy, but not particularly carefully-organized company.

The MIA's activities as they were documented in its notarial registers changed significantly after Gerardus' death in 1361. One month after Gerardus died, the MIA began to work exclusively with the notary Gasparinus Mozzi, whose registers look completely different from those of Gerardus.¹⁶³ Gasparinus wrote in a small, controlled hand, and carefully drew margins on both sides of the page, thus giving him space to enter clear notes about the identity of the parties involved and the type of transaction contained in the instrument. The registers were also ordered with folio numbers. Equally significantly, the organization of the documents in Gasparinus Mozzi's registers differed substantially from those of Gerardus Soyarius. While Gerardus' registers contain numerous documents created both at the request of the confraternity and individuals wishing to donate or bequeath property to the MIA, Gasparinus' registers were more rigidly organized.

¹⁶² See ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, buste 5–14.

¹⁶³ See ASBg, Notarile, G. Mozzi, buste 84a/b (1361–63).

Of the four extant registers dating from between 1361 and 1389, all but one contain official MIA records, while the other, a smaller register dated between 1372 and 1374, is devoted to testaments in which the confraternity was named as a recipient of property.¹⁶⁴ While this new presentation reflected more general changes to notarial practice in the later fourteenth century, it also displayed the notary's (and thus the MIA's) sense of the company as a well-ordered institution.¹⁶⁵ It is safe to assume that the difference in the organization of the registers reflects a change in the MIA's self-concept. Seen through these registers, the MIA looks much more coherently organized than previously, with members' requests of the confraternity set apart from the company's official business.

By electing higher-status ministers in the fourteenth century, the MIA aligned itself with civic government and both reflected and promoted the social elitism and institutional centralization which characterized the advent of the *signori*. Through its selection of notaries, the MIA also communicated its new priorities to its membership. By incorporating such "signorial" values into its institutional structure, the MIA reshaped itself as an institution and enabled the transition to a more centralized form of government in the city and diocese. But at the same time, several aspects of confraternal life in Bergamo kept these institutions distinct from the social and political culture of the city. The continuing emphasis on the unity of all souls within confraternities and the activities of powerful individuals like Alberico da Rosciate within them exemplified the way in which confraternities simultaneously reflected and challenged the social order of their communities during the later Middle Ages.

¹⁶⁴ The registers of the notary who became the official notary of the MIA after Gasparinus, Iohannes Fanconi, similarly contain no records created at the request of individuals for the MIA. See ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, buste 117 a/b and 118 a/b.

¹⁶⁵ On the impact of notarial registers on the organization of ecclesiastical and civic experience in medieval Italy, see David Foote, *Lordship, Reform, and the Development of Civil Society in Medieval Italy: The Bishopric of Orvieto, 1100–1250* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2004) esp. 125–160.

CHAPTER TWO

SHE OFFERS HERSELF AND HER BELONGINGS: HOSPITALS IN BERGAMO

Perhaps more so than confraternities, hospitals in Bergamo were shaped by the social and political changes that marked their communities during the fourteenth century. Service in hospitals played a multifaceted role in lay religious experience. First, the institutions provided wealthy lay people with a more flexible alternative to monastic profession. Second, they assured the needy, sick, and pilgrims of care and support, while at the same time containing and regulating those marginal groups. By 1400, however, the wide variety of social and spiritual services previously available in hospitals narrowed. Throughout Italy the officials of fifteenth-century hospitals re-imagined them as civic institutions administered by medical professionals who provided physical care for the sick.

The change to the administrative structure of hospitals and the services available within them after 1400 had a profound effect on the laity in Bergamo. Prior to 1400, hospitals in Bergamo, as elsewhere on the Italian peninsula, afforded lay women, especially, an outlet for their pious and social needs in a way which was almost unmatched in the medieval city.¹ Women also enjoyed a similar status to men in the organizations. For example, in most of the institutions, lay sisters' presence was recorded at chapter meetings alongside that of their male counterparts, and in the mid-fourteenth century both men and women served as hospital administrators.² As well, evidence of lay women's property transactions with each other within Bergamo's hospitals suggests that in the early decades of the fourteenth century, women created nearly-autonomous communities within

¹ For an example of women and men working together within a thirteenth-century hospital, see the important article by Daniela Rando, "'Laicus Religiosus': tra strutture civili ed ecclesiastiche: l'ospedale di Ognissanti in Treviso (sec. XIII)," *Studi Medievali* 24 (1983) 617–652.

² On hospital chapters, see Jean Imbert, *Les Hôpitaux en Droit Canonique* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1947) 273–274.

the institutions. Then, as hospitals came increasingly under the control of civic leaders, the numerous small hospitals which had proliferated in Bergamo were consolidated into one large hospital dedicated to S. Marco by the middle of the fifteenth century, and lay women lost the communities they had created within the smaller institutions. The reform of hospitals, and the resulting exclusion of lay women from the institutions, is the most dramatic example of the way in which lay religious culture fell into step with the social hierarchies of secular civic culture in the later fourteenth century.

Hospital foundations

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, hospitals in Bergamo, like those in other cities on the peninsula, did not conform to one model of institutional structure.³ Some were attached to local religious institutions, such as monasteries or parish churches, and shared their patrimony with those institutions.⁴ Others, such as the large hospital of S. Vincenzo, were co-administered by ecclesiastical and confraternity officials and remained autonomous institutions for several decades during the fourteenth century. The variety of hospital forms in the city reflected authorities' acceptance of the existence of many paths to salvation.

Several of the best-known hospitals in Bergamo during the fourteenth century were founded by individual testators, both clerics and lay people, seeking to provide care for their needy relatives. Castelinus de Rapazeltis, a cathedral canon who left a 600 *lire* bequest to found the hospital of S. Vincenzo in 1323, wanted his foundation to assist his relatives, especially members of his immediate family and the

³ Bergamo's hospitals included S. Vincenzo (founded in 1323); S. Lorenzo (founded in the thirteenth century); S. Lazzaro (founded in the twelfth century); S. Grata inter Vites (founded in the twelfth century); S. Bernardo (founded before 1323) and S. Alessandro (founded in 1352). Others were S. Spirito (part of the convent of the same name), S. Caterina (connected to the parish church of the same name), S. Leonardo (connected to the eponymous church), S. Tomaso (administered by a small flagellant confraternity), S. Maria Magdalena (run by the same *disciplinati* confraternity), S. Maria della Caritate, and S. Maria Maggiore (founded at the end of the fourteenth century).

⁴ These included the hospitals of S. Caterina, S. Tomaso, S. Antonio, S. Bernardo, and S. Maria della Caritate.

family of Rogerius de La Sale, who were perhaps his mother's relatives. In a similar manner, the lay founder of the small hospital of S. Alessandro asked that it be used to provide security for his family.⁵ Wealthy men also established memorials for themselves through the foundation of hospitals. For instance, in his 1304 will, the notary Bertramus de Brolo stated that if his heirs died without legitimate successors, then his estate was to be used to found a hospital to be named "the hospital of Bertramus de Brolo." He requested that the hospital be based in two places: at his house in Bergamo and his house in Curno, a few kilometres from the city. For Bertramus, putting his name on the hospital left what Samuel Cohn has called a "lasting mark on earthly posterity," which also satisfied the needs of his soul.⁶

The physical structure of hospitals also varied according to the amounts of the bequests left by their founders. As with Bertramus de Brolo, some testators asked that their houses be turned into hospitals. In these cases, the administrators of the new hospitals did not make substantial changes to the structure of the buildings, and so these hospitals were almost indistinguishable from the houses around them. For example, the transformation of the house of MIA official Guillelmus de Buboi into a hospital dedicated to S. Alessandro was a simple, inexpensive project which was completed within a two week period.⁷ The MIA spent only 16 *lire* in total on building materials, furnishings, and wages for the workers. The largest expense was for beds and bedding. Officials spent 7 *lire* to build beds, and more than 4 *lire* for covers and bedclothes.⁸ The new hospital was also outfitted with locks on the doors, and a roof was built over a courtyard or entrance. In one of the only gestures made to distinguish the hospital

⁵ For these foundations, see BCBg, MIA perg. 1184 and ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1346–47) 146–7. Ecclesiastical officials in the fourteenth century throughout Europe were willing to allow both laypeople and clerics to found hospitals. See Imbert, *Les Hôpitaux en Droit Canonique*, 67–68.

⁶ Cohn argues that such concerns became more pronounced after the arrival of plague on the Italian peninsula, although I have not seen this change in Bergamo. Cohn, *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death: Six Renaissance Cities in Central Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992) 22.

⁷ The hospital remained in use for several decades after its foundation. See records naming it in the 1360s and 1380s in BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1362 and MIA archivio 1814, 8r.

⁸ BCBg, AB 229, 76v and 77r.

physically from the surrounding buildings, Andrea the painter decorated it with “certain figures,” and received 4 *lire* for his efforts.⁹

In contrast to the simplicity of S. Alessandro, larger hospitals could be quite elaborate and might include several buildings within a walled compound. But although they were physically more imposing than smaller hospitals, these institutions, too, were integral parts of their neighborhoods. The hospital of S. Lorenzo, for instance, was a walled complex of buildings located just inside the walls of the city near the gate of S. Lorenzo.¹⁰ The hospital’s “great hall” (*lobia magna*) sometimes served as the site for the induction of new lay members into the institution.¹¹ S. Lorenzo was also an important physical presence in the local community. Neighbors and hospital dwellers alike congregated around its doors, gossiping and watching each other. Witnesses’ descriptions of a Saturday night in the early 1370s tell us that some inhabitants of the neighborhood around S. Lorenzo observed the hospital’s minister fighting with one of the lay brothers, or *conversi*, near the doors of the building.¹² Like S. Lorenzo, the hospital of S. Vincenzo was a substantial building. It was a walled compound located in the centre of the city, beside the canonry of S. Vincenzo in the neighborhood of S. Cassiano.¹³ In the walls there were two large doors (*porte magne*) and within the main building was a staircase which led to at least two *solari*, or upper floors. The hospital was expensive, costing 600 *lire* to build at a time when a house could be bought for one tenth of that amount.¹⁴ Despite this, S. Vincenzo, like S. Lorenzo, was also closely connected to the community in several ways. Rental agreements indicate that the hospital administrators provided space within the main building to local tradespeople, who established workshops there. In 1331, for instance, the ministers of the hospital rented a shop to a shoemaker named Stephaninus

⁹ BCBg, AB 229, 77r.

¹⁰ The *domibus* of the hospital are described in a court record. ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 193r.

¹¹ In 1350s two women became *conversae* of S. Lorenzo in such a ceremony, “above the great hall of the house and hospital.” ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–51) 349.

¹² ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 191r.

¹³ For a description of the hospital’s location, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1331–32) 26.

¹⁴ On the cost of the hospital, see BCBg, MIA perg. 713. For descriptions of its structure, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 5 (1326–28) 190–191.

in the “great house” (*domus magna*) of the hospital. We know that there were other such shops in the hospital since this one was described as “near the shop which Pecinus de Leffe, the smith keeps.”¹⁵ S. Vincenzo was also connected to the neighborhood through the properties the hospital owned, including a house in the *vicinia* of S. Cassiano.¹⁶

Details from oblation ceremonies and wills also provide information about the interiors of some hospitals. From these records, we can see that hospitals were comfortable homes for the men and women of means who joined them as oblates in the fourteenth century. The comfort that hospital oblates enjoyed in the institutions further indicates that hospitals were closely connected to the rest of the community, since oblates were not required to give up the material goods they had enjoyed in their previous lives.¹⁷ Most lay sisters of S. Vincenzo lived in their own rooms or *camera cubiculari*, and had access to separate kitchens. A few women shared accommodations, but their common life was a choice, and was not imposed on them. The oblates also surrounded themselves with homely possessions. For instance, when domina Gisla de Sivernatis went to live in the hospital of S. Vincenzo in 1330, she furnished her room with several pieces of furniture, including two chests and a large bed with a feather mattress and a feather pillow. She owned two pairs of linen sheets and a lambswool cover for the bed, which was also covered or enclosed by a wooden structure called a *celonum*. Gisla requested that the hospital alter this structure after her death and use it in the funeral services of those who died there.¹⁸ Her bed and its coverings were substantial enough that she requested they be made into three separate beds for poor residents of the hospital after her death. Like Gisla, domina Marchisia della Fontana also furnished her room in S. Vincenzo with comfortable, attractive items, including a painted desk, chests, a bed, and other household furniture.¹⁹ Marchisia too asked that her bed be divided after her death; in her 1359 will she

¹⁵ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1331–32) 48.

¹⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1331–32) 122.

¹⁷ Daniela Rando’s study of the hospital of Ognissanti in Treviso reveals that institution’s close connection to civic life: some of the men and women who took the titles of frater and soror in Ognissanti lived outside the hospital but ate all of their meals in the institution. Rando, “Laicus Religiosus,” 620.

¹⁸ For Gisla’s will, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 6 (1330–34) 22–24.

¹⁹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–1338) 367.

stated that it could be made into five separate beds.²⁰ The lack of austerity in these women's lives is also evidenced by the presence of their servants in the hospital. Domina Gisla had a servant called Bonetta, who entered the hospital with her. Bonetta had a small bed of her own, supplied with a mattress, pillow, one pair of linen sheets, a wool blanket and a linen coverlet. Domina Marchisia had a servant called Rosa whom she promised six gold florins in her 1336 will.²¹ Another woman living in S. Vincenzo in the mid-fourteenth century, domina Sempermia, hired a servant called Ursulina to serve her in her last illness.²²

The links between the hospital and the surrounding community are also apparent in the procedures following a death in the hospital. Officials organized the burials of all (both the poor and the oblates) who died within the hospital. When domina Sempermia died in S. Vincenzo in July of 1346, Albertus de Payerolis, the minister of the hospital, called three witnesses from outside the institution to come to her room. In the presence of the witnesses and the notary Gerardus Soyarius, Albertus stated that domina Sempermia had lived and died in the hospital. He then showed her body to the witnesses, and the notary added that according to custom the body was placed inside a *lantiarice*, probably a box or coffin.²³

The accommodations available to the poor and sick residents of hospitals were less attractive than those for oblates, but a few records suggest that paupers expected a basic level of care from hospitals. Testamentary bequests to hospitals indicate that in some hospitals paupers slept in their own beds, furnished with sheets and blankets.²⁴ The inhabitants of hospitals complained when such facilities were

²⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 12 (1358–59) 360.

²¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–1338) 367.

²² ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1346–47) 141.

²³ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1346–47) 139.

²⁴ See, for instance, the bequests from domina Benvenuta, widow of MIA official Marcus de Drosio, in which Benvenuta left the hospital of S. Vincenzo 40 *soldi pro uno lecto unius pauperis* and an additional 40 *soldi* to the hospital of S. Maria Magdalena *pro uno lecto in quo cubat unus pauper* and 40 *soldi* to the hospital of S. Leonardo for the same purpose. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–50) 262–263. Also see a testamentary bequest to the hospital of the Magdalena leaving one bed each for ten paupers living in the hospital. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1347–48) 394. Jean Imbert notes in the case of hospitals in medieval France that that “le lit unique n’était pas inconnu et il était toujours employé pour les maladies graves.” Imbert, *Les Hôpitaux en Droit Canonique*, 133.

not provided; a number of paupers protested about having to buy sheets for their beds in the hospital of S. Lorenzo during the early 1370s, and one claimed that the sheets were so old and ripped that he would not have picked them up if he had found them in the street.²⁵ While they seem to have had their own beds within the hospitals of the city, it was likely that the poor did not have their own rooms. The will of one domina Zoanna, the widow of Filippus de Rocascho, a “poor and sick” woman who lay dying in S. Vincenzo in 1336, suggests that S. Vincenzo was organized this way. Although she was confined to her bed, Zoanna did not dictate her will in a private bedroom. Instead, the notary stated simply that the will was created “in the hospital,” signifying that poor women, who had not donated property to the hospital on entrance to it, were not provided with rooms of their own.²⁶ The leper hospital of S. Lazzaro may have been an exception to this general rule of dormitory-style housing for the poor. There, residents told the bishop’s vicar in 1292 that each of them, oblates and lepers alike, had “their own part” in the hospital, suggesting, perhaps, that they each lived in their own rooms.²⁷

Apart from the leper hospital, few hospitals in Bergamo were founded to provide specialized care. A longstanding convention holds that the hospital of S. Maria Magdalena was organized for the care of those suffering from mental illness, but there is little or no contemporary evidence to support this claim. Bequests in a few testaments from the later fourteenth century indicate that the hospital of S. Leonardo housed *trovatelli*, or abandoned infants.²⁸ But instead of providing specific care for one group, most hospitals in Bergamo offered basic care, including shelter, food, and spiritual assistance, for anyone in need. Paupers could approach hospitals on their own asking for shelter,²⁹ or they could be brought to hospitals by others, as was Paxina de Moyo, who was given shelter in the hospital of

²⁵ ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 185r.

²⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–1338) 361.

²⁷ BCBg, PCB 3859.

²⁸ For instance, see the 1361 will in which a testator left 10 *lire* to buy cloth for clothing for *trovatellos* living in the hospital. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 232.

²⁹ Such as the seven paupers who asked for (and did not receive) shelter at S. Lorenzo in the early 1370s. See the testimony of Baronus fq Utini de Panizollis de Zonio, ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 193r.

S. Vincenzo in 1355 at the request of the officials of the MIA.³⁰ Paupers who were ill and confined to their beds received special care. Even in a hospital in which the poor themselves complained of being mistreated, witnesses admitted that the minister gave paupers some soup when they were ill.³¹ The community was indignant when paupers living in hospitals were required to beg outside the institutions for food, indicating that they expected the institutions to support their residents fully.³² In exchange for their care, paupers were also expected to “govern themselves well,” behaving according to standards set for them by the hospital officials.³³

While paupers’ behavior was regulated within hospitals, the institutions also provided them with spiritual services.³⁴ Hospitals valorized poverty and suffering, giving the poor or the sick a new identity as sufferers for Christ.³⁵ The tension in hospitals between control of the poor and sick and assistance for them is perhaps best seen in the example of the lepers of the hospital of S. Lazzaro. Those suffering from leprosy had special status within Christianity.³⁶ Their suffering brought social death, as they were required to remove themselves from the community and divest themselves of all of their

³⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 11 (1355–56) 142. The document admitting her to the hospital stipulated that she would not pay for her lodging in the institution. (*ipsa Paxina possit stare et habitare et habere mansionem in domibus dicti hospitalis de cotidie toto tempore vite sue . . . ipsa volente sic remanere et se bene regente sine aliqua pensione reddenda.*)

³¹ From witness testimony about the hospital of S. Lorenzo in 1370: the witness, a *conversus* of the hospital, alleged that the minister and his lover: *simul in ipsa camera comedunt et bibunt nec bene nutritus pauperes suprascripti hospitalis nisi quando erant tale infirmi quod iacebant in lecto faciebat eis datur aliquantulum manestram . . .* ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 192r. See below for more on this conflict.

³² ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 185r.

³³ See the earlier comments about Paxina de Moyo, ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 11 (1355–56) 142.

³⁴ Some hospitals, including S. Lazzaro, S. Maria Magdalena, and S. Tomaso, were identified in the records interchangeably as *hospitalis* and *ecclesia*.

³⁵ Maureen Miller, *The Formation of a Medieval Church: Ecclesiastical Change in Verona, 950–1150* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) 91.

³⁶ The literature on lepers in the Middle Ages is vast and I can only mention a few notable references here. For contrasting views of the treatment of lepers by authorities, see R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) especially 45–65, and David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996) especially 56–63 and 93–124. For a brief introduction to the problem of locating lepers in medieval society, see Catherine Peyroux, “The Leper’s Kiss,” in *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts*, Sharon Farmer and Barbara Rosenwein, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) 172–188.

possessions. One fourteenth-century ceremony for the exclusion of lepers symbolizing this social death described the priest taking the afflicted individual to the church, where the leper participated in a “funeral” ceremony, kneeling below a black cloth set on trestles before the altar to hear the mass. The priest was to then lead the leper to his new home (isolated from the rest of the community) where the cleric would use a spade to throw soil on the feet of the leper, saying “be dead to the world, but live again with God.” The priest then read a list of sanctions to the afflicted person, forbidding them to mix with other people in any public place, and denying them contact with anyone but other lepers.³⁷

Lepers were therefore literally the untouchable, but their abject nature also linked them to the divine. The connection between leprosy and divinity was a centuries-old concept; in the early Middle Ages, saints such as Martin of Tours had “proved” their sanctity by approaching lepers. By the later medieval period, however, lepers themselves were seen as saintly figures, or “the veiled Christ.”³⁸ Ironically, one commentator argues, this vision of the leper as a saintly figure, especially in Thomas of Celano’s writing about Francis’ encounter with the leper, downplayed the specific suffering of lepers themselves. Thomas instead emphasized the way in which lepers acted as a pathway for Francis to approach Christ. In this way, the suffering of Francis-as-Christ took precedence over the “forlorn and desperate bodies” of lepers.³⁹

The writings of Thomas of Celano illustrate one way in which lepers functioned in spiritual life as representatives of Christ. But the social problem of leprosy remained a concern of medieval authorities, who developed increasingly complex ways of dealing with them. During the thirteenth century in Bergamo and other cities on the peninsula, authorities both from the church and commune sought to regulate and control lepers within their communities. Leper hospitals, developed in the twelfth century, became sites in which the afflicted were isolated from the community. At the same time, in these early leper hospitals, lepers lived autonomously, helping to

³⁷ John Shinnars, ed. and trans., “Ceremony for the exclusion of a leper” in *Medieval Popular Religion: A Reader* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1995) 279–281. For the isolation of a leper in Bergamo, see ASBg, Notarile, A. Capitani de Scalve, busta 27a, 225.

³⁸ Peyroux, “The Leper’s Kiss,” 185.

³⁹ Peyroux, “The Leper’s Kiss,” 188.

administer the hospitals and establishing their own communities within them. At the end of the thirteenth century, however, civic and ecclesiastical authorities sought to control the hospitals further by restricting lepers' freedoms even within their institutions.

We have no information about the early history of the leper hospital of S. Lazzaro in Bergamo, but valuable records from early thirteenth-century Verona illustrate the way one such institution developed. Parallels in the location and later history of the Veronese and Bergamasque hospitals suggest that the two institutions might also have shared a similar early history. During the 1220s in Verona, a group of lepers testified to the process in which their community had been moved from one area outside the city to another. As a part of their testimony, they described the early foundation of the hospital and the organization of their lives together. Verona's leper hospital originated in an initiative by lay people. Some fifteen years before the witnesses gave their testimony, a widow called Garscenda asked another citizen of Verona, dominus Gerardus de Nova, for land "for the love of God" with which she could build a house for a leper called Plano, dedicated to the soul of her late husband.⁴⁰ Her brother-in-law Rodolfo soon joined her in the venture. Another lay man, dominus Gerardus Wenichus, testified that he had donated wood and other materials for the building, and had even helped design the foundation (*fundamentum*) of the house himself.⁴¹ The clergy also became a part of the project, and one priest, Pax, the prior of the church of S. Leonardo, testified that when he was a *parvulus scolarolus* he had visited the sick in the hospital with another priest, Walinberto.⁴²

Similar to the hospital in Verona, and others throughout western Europe, the leper hospital in Bergamo, S. Lazzaro, was located outside the city walls. Again like the Veronese hospital, the hospital was peopled by lay brothers and sisters and clerics, and the lepers themselves also took a role in the life of the institution. Lepers appeared along with the lay oblates and clerics resident in the hospital in

⁴⁰ For the testimony of Gerardus and all of the other witnesses, see Annamaria Rossi Saccomani, ed., *Le carte dei lebbrosi di Verona tra XII e XIII secolo* (Padova: Antenore, 1989) 146–164.

⁴¹ Gerardus stated: *et ego pro illa domina Garscenda dedi lignamen illius domus et pro ea de lapidibus et interfui ad edificandum et designandum fundamentum illius domus* . . . Rossi Saccomani, ed. *Le carte dei lebbrosi di Verona*, 163.

⁴² Rossi Saccomani, ed. *Le carte dei lebbrosi di Verona*, 158.

records of the meetings of the institution. When Peterzanus de Peterzanis, a canon of the cathedral of S. Vincenzo and the bishop's vicar, visited the hospital in 1292 with several of his officials, the visitors met with two clerics, Matteus Fiarcherij and Pre Petrus de Laripa, three lay brothers, Frater Morarius, Frater Benedictus, and Frater Bertramus, two men and two women identified as *infirmi et infirme*, and three servants, likely women who helped care for the lepers.⁴³

We know little about the assistance that was provided to the lepers living within S. Lazzaro. Instead, sources reveal details about the residents' religious life within the hospital. The church of S. Lazzaro provided similar religious services to other churches in the city. During the visit of the bishop's vicar to the hospital in 1292, its clerics told the vicar that they preached and prayed regularly (although their chapel did not have the status of a parish church), but their activities were compromised by the fact that some of their liturgical texts were poorly maintained. The daily antiphony was "half complete and in terrible (*vilis*) condition," while the *serimoniale* only comprised material from Advent to Easter. Other items were more usable, such as a psalter, which the clerics described as "quite beautiful," a prayer book, a nightly antiphony which was both "good and beautiful," and a "fairly good missal." The church also owned an *epistolare* and a "fairly satisfactory" copy of the gospels. The episcopal visitor also took note of the fact that while there were a chalice and patens in the church, the clerics had no holy oil or communion wafers, and thus could not administer the Eucharist. The resident clerics protested that since the faithful only received communion during Easter week they did not need to keep a regular supply of these items, but the vicar reminded them that at other times of the year they might need to minister to the faithful and should have such supplies on hand. Despite the incomplete nature of the liturgical objects which the hospital held, the vicar's emphasis on the provision of spiritual services within the hospital points to the expectation that its inhabitants were living a religious life within its walls.⁴⁴

The 1292 episcopal visit to S. Lazzaro also indicates that the bishop was interested in extending his influence over the hospital by

⁴³ For the record of the visit, see BCBg, PCB 3859.

⁴⁴ On the development of this concept within the leper hospitals of Verona in the twelfth century, see Miller, *The Formation of a Medieval Church*, 87–91.

the nature of the questions that he put to the hospital's residents.⁴⁵ The vicar asked whether the hospital was governed by a minister or rector, and the residents' answers revealed that they enjoyed a degree of independence within the institution. They told the vicar that they had no minister, and instead they elected a cellarer or *sindic* each year who represented both the healthy and sick residents of the hospital. His main role was to receive and redistribute the income of the hospital to residents. The vicar's immediate response was to tell the residents of the hospital to ensure that they continued to elect a cellarer each year, and to instruct that official to make a monthly record of their expenses and receipts. A few years after the 1292 visit, the governing structure of S. Lazzaro was further reorganized, with the appointment of a minister, who was a cleric chosen by the bishop. Both lay and clerical residents of the institution were required to promise to obey the minister.⁴⁶ Thus S. Lazzaro, which had been previously run by its residents, was now controlled by clerics. In subsequent years the hospital prospered, seen in its 1342 reception of several annuities from testators. In that year, the number of lay oblates had risen to eight, while there were three women described as *infirmes*.⁴⁷

Oblates and Officials

In the early fourteenth century, the notary Bertramus de Brolo not only described the hospital he wished to be founded in his name after his death as we saw above, but he also described how he wanted the institution to be administered. He asked that hospital officials appoint four lay brothers and four lay sisters of at least thirty years of age as administrators. These administrators were not to be educated (*literati*), but instead should know how to cultivate the earth, so that they could work his land successfully. Both men and women who were appointed were to dress soberly, men in habits of white,

⁴⁵ BCBg, PCB 3859.

⁴⁶ The first election of a minister appears to have taken place in 1299. See BCBg, PCB, 1431A for a record of the election. For the document requesting the obedience of all to the minister, see ASBg, Notarile, V. da Poma, busta 98 (1367–71) unpaginated (but follows 241).

⁴⁷ ASBg, Notarile, G. Parvis, busta 19, 66–68.

with a black hood, and women entirely in black.⁴⁸ Bertramus' vision of a hospital community composed of hardworking, ascetic lay brothers and sisters runs counter to actual practice in most of Bergamo's hospitals during the fourteenth century. Rather than engaging in physical work and denying themselves material comforts within the hospitals, most lay brothers and sisters retained their ties to the secular world after oblation, and few engaged in any physical work within the institutions.⁴⁹ Instead, hospitals in Bergamo provided lay people, especially single women and widows, shelter, companionship, and an outlet for contemplative piety.

Twenty years ago, it was acceptable (to some scholars) to assert that women joined hospitals in the Middle Ages simply to fulfill their "natural propensity for compassion, more developed in women than it is in men."⁵⁰ This essentialist stereotype of women as nurturers has more recently been rejected in favor of the argument that hospitals appealed to women because they provided them with the opportunity to participate in the "busy, engaged piety" that attracted women and men alike in this period.⁵¹ Recent scholarly work on hospitals also emphasizes the unusual opportunity these institutions provided for lay women to live out their religious ambitions in the later Middle Ages.⁵²

There is no doubt that hospitals provided women and some men with an opportunity to experience the vibrant religious movements of the later Middle Ages.⁵³ But that was not the only reason women

⁴⁸ ACVBg, CAP 4 (B. de Ossa) 54v.

⁴⁹ On the way in which the "institutional paradox" of lay *conversi* in religious communities was resolved between the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, see Cosimo Damiano Fonseca, "I conversi nelle comunità canonicali," in *I Laici nella 'Societas Christiana' dei Secoli XI e XII* (Milano, 1968) 301.

⁵⁰ For an argument grounded explicitly in these terms, see Daniel Le Blevet, "Le rôle des femmes dans l'assistance et la charité," in *La Femme dans la vie religieuse du Languedoc (XIII-XIV s.)*, Marie-Humbert Vicaire, et al., eds., *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 23 (1988), 179.

⁵¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Mysticism and Asceticism of Medieval Women: Some Comments on the Typologies of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch" in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 54. Religious orders for women, especially the Beguines, exemplified this type of piety. See Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, Steven Rowan, trans. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1995) 139–152, as well as, most recently, Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200–1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

⁵² Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: the Archeology of Religious Women* (London: Routledge, 1994) 172–176.

⁵³ On the religious significance of hospitals for the laity, see Antonio Rigon,

and men joined hospitals as oblates. The laity—especially unmarried and widowed women—also sought out hospitals for the shelter and physical security the institutions offered.⁵⁴ Furthermore, both men and women took advantage of the tax exemptions that accompanied oblation to hospitals.⁵⁵ Most of the individuals entering hospitals in Bergamo were well-off, making donations of land and houses to the institutions on entrance, and leaving substantial estates behind. Thus, hospital membership likely provided them financial, social, and pious benefits. Ultimately, the spatial and religious context of hospitals made the experiences of their oblates unique in the late medieval city.

While hospitals offered women shelter and companionship, within the institutions women and men still lived within a conventionally gendered society. Roles for lay sisters in hospitals corresponded to the prevailing (elite) view that “good” women should be subject to restrictions on their movement. Women could serve the sick (although in Bergamo they seldom did) or live a life of contemplation within the institution, but they took on no responsibilities in the outside world.⁵⁶ For women, then, hospitals resembled households, providing their female members with security, but also limiting their contact with the world outside the institution. In contrast, lay brothers in Bergamo, as in the hospitals of other Italian cities, had a much broader experience both inside and outside hospitals, administering the institutions, working with the sick, and serving in other civic organizations.

Hospitals in 1300 were administered in several ways. In some, religious orders or clerics were the chief administrators. In others,

S. Giacomo di Monselice nel Medio Evo. On women's commitments to hospitals in Florence, see Anna Benvenuti Papi, “In Domo Bighittarum seu Viduarum”: Pubblica Assistenza e Marginalità Femminile Nella Firenze Medievale,” in *Città e Servizi Sociali*, 325–353.

⁵⁴ Hospitals provided lone women with security in a world which viewed them with suspicion. On pressure on widows to marry or stay with their natal families in late medieval Florence, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, “The Cruel Mother: Maternity, Widowhood, and Dowry in Florence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries,” in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Lydia G. Cochrane, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 119.

⁵⁵ As noted by Duane Osheim in his article “Conversion, Conversi and the Christian Life in Late Medieval Tuscany,” *Speculum* 58 (2) (1983) 371.

⁵⁶ Maria Grazia Cesana notes a similarly gendered structure in the hospitals of Como, asserting that in their enclosure, the *sorores* of Como's hospital of S. Vitale “vengono messe . . . sullo stesso piano dei poveri . . .” while the brothers of the hospital were free to move about the city collecting alms. “Comunità Ospedaliere di Como,” in *Uomini e Donne in Comunità* (Verona: Cierre Edizioni, 1994) 149.

lay governors, both male and female, played a prominent role in management. A few hospitals, such as S. Lazzaro and S. Lorenzo, were initially run by just one or two people, while the administration of those hospitals run by confraternities was more complex. In all cases, however, hospitals that were governed both by laypeople and clerics gradually came more fully under the supervision of the clergy and confraternities (especially the MIA) during the later part of the century. Finally, by the end of the century there was a change in the role of women in hospitals. As a reflection of the growing restrictions on women's public religious activities, hospitals ceased to be governed by women alone.

During the fourteenth century, women played a role in the management of several hospitals in Bergamo. There were several ways in which they came to assume these roles. Some religious women governed hospitals as a part of their duties. The hospital of S. Bernardo, linked to the third order of the Franciscans, was overseen by a female religious during the fourteenth century.⁵⁷ In the case of lay women, some founders of hospitals named their female relatives as potential administrators of the organizations as when, in 1335, a testator founding a hospital outside Bergamo named himself as the minister, his wife as a co-minister and their daughter as one of the other administrators of the institution.⁵⁸ In a similar manner, the founder of the hospital of S. Alessandro in the mid-fourteenth century asked that one of his female relatives be named minister of the hospital if she survived him.⁵⁹ Likewise, in his 1323 will, the founder of S. Vincenzo, Castelinus de Rapazeltis, named his brother Iacobus and his heirs the administrators of the hospital along with local lay men and religious. When Iacobus died, his sisters domina Anexia, the wife of dominus Paganus of Tresolzo, and Catarina, wife of the nobleman dominus Teutaldus Suardi, became co-ministers of the hospital.⁶⁰ In all of these cases, the male founders assumed that the position of minister would provide the designated women with shelter and protection. Then, late in the fourteenth century, it became common for

⁵⁷ Such as domina Anexia, abbess of the monastery of S. Vincenzo de Almonia and minister of S. Bernardo in 1349/50. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–50) 277.

⁵⁸ ACVBg, Perg. Cap. 4650.

⁵⁹ See BCBg, MIA perg. 1184.

⁶⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1331–32) 185.

married couples to govern the hospital of S. Vincenzo together. The *conversus* Albertus de Payarolis and his wife domina Bona did so after they married in the hospital in 1350, and Bona continued as minister after the death of Albertus in 1361.⁶¹ Then on her death in 1384, another married couple, Venderminus de Guascalla and his wife Catalina, took over administration of the hospital.⁶²

At first glance, women seemed to enjoy unusual authority through their roles as hospital ministers. Female hospital ministers attended meetings of the hospital chapters and administered the institutions' finances. But hospitals were not like other public institutions in the medieval city. Women could become hospital administrators while they did not lead other institutions (such as confraternities or local political groups) because hospitals closely resembled households or monasteries. Women already managed their households, cared for children, cooked, and took care of household accounts. If hospitals were an extension of the household, then women's roles as hospital administrators might be acceptable to the community in a way that holding an official role within confraternities was not. Still, while their roles in hospitals resembled those in the home, lay women became more publicly visible in hospitals than they were in their own homes. Hospitals brought them into contact with others, including men, that they might not normally encounter. In this way, women's positions as hospital administrators provided them with a measure of authority that they did not hold within the household.

However, women normally served as hospital administrators on the orders of men, or alongside men. Furthermore, comparing what we know of women's work as hospital administrators with that of their male counterparts, we learn the extent to which the women's activities were circumscribed in relation to men's. The lay men who served as hospital ministers played significant public roles in the community. The example of Albertus de Payerolis' experience as a hospital minister reveals much on this topic. As administrator of the hospital of S. Vincenzo, Albertus was a notable figure in civic religious life from the 1330s until his death in 1361. He joined S. Vincenzo

⁶¹ For a record of Albertus' death, see BCBg, AB 229, 124r. For the marriage of Albertus and Bona, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–50) 353–354, and for Bona's subsequent assumption of the ministerial role after she was widowed, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117a, 636.

⁶² ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117a, 634–636.

in the 1330s, and became minister of the hospital in the early 1340s, although he had no known connection with the hospital's founder.⁶³ As minister, Albertus cultivated bonds with other lay pious groups in the city, especially the confraternity of the Misericordia Maggiore. He served as an official of the MIA in the 1330s and 40s, and often appeared as a witness to transactions involving the confraternity.⁶⁴ His dual responsibility as hospital and confraternity official was not unique; other individuals, including a *conversus* of the hospital of S. Grata, and two officials from the hospital of S. Bernardo, also held office in the MIA during the fourteenth century.⁶⁵ On the one hand, women could not have cultivated such connections, because, as we have seen, they were not permitted to hold positions as confraternity officials. On the other hand, it would not have been possible for a woman to carry out some of the other public tasks Albertus took on as minister of S. Vincenzo, including collecting bodies for burial.⁶⁶ Albertus' importance within the civic religious community was made clear by the fact that when he died, the MIA spent the relatively large sum of 11 *lire* on his funeral.⁶⁷ Hospitals therefore can be seen to have provided men with opportunities for action within the public realm, while they contained women within a domestic space.

By the end of the fourteenth century, administrative roles for the laity in Bergamo's hospitals altered. In contrast to the earlier variety of organizational structures within the institutions, hospital administration was now firmly in the hands of an elite group of clerics and lay men, especially the leaders of local confraternities. The minutes of the meetings of the MIA from the later fourteenth century demonstrate how the confraternity increasingly asserted its status as the sole governor of S. Vincenzo.⁶⁸ The growing bureaucratization

⁶³ Testamentary bequests reveal that Albertus was minister of S. Vincenzo by at least 1343. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1343) 66–67.

⁶⁴ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1341–42) 112 and 152, and busta 10, 21–22. For one example of Albertus' services as a witness for the MIA, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–50) 294.

⁶⁵ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1336–1340) 51 and busta 9 (1343) 12–13.

⁶⁶ Such as the burial he arranged for the man killed in the *vicinia* of S. Pancrazio in 1361. BCBg, AB 229, 123v.

⁶⁷ BCBg, AB 229, 124r.

⁶⁸ For an example of the minutes of one meeting, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 118b, 152–158.

of hospitals also resulted in the marginalization of female hospital ministers—few, if any, women took on that role after the 1360s. But the marginalization of women from positions of power in hospitals was not an isolated phenomenon. Instead, it was part of a larger movement to contain and control women's presence in the institutions, and likely their involvement in public religious activities.

Before the mid-fifteenth century, hospital officials in Bergamo divided lay men and women who joined hospitals into two groups: *familiares* and *conversi*. Each group initially appeared to have a different function. In accordance with their origins in monastic culture, *familiares* occasionally served the sick and poor residents of the hospital. *Conversi*, in contrast, sometimes took a spiritual or contemplative role.⁶⁹ Duane Osheim and others have argued that by the later Middle Ages, *conversi* were defined largely by their commitment of property to a religious institution (including hospitals and monasteries) and by the tax exemptions that accompanied their status.⁷⁰ But *conversi* also enjoyed a quasi-religious status, which was sometimes evident in the character of their oblation ceremonies. These often took place in the presence of hospital officials, clerics and other hospital members at the altar of a local church, as though to underline the religious aspect of this ceremony. Here the new *conversa* or *conversus* kneeled before the altar while promising “herself and her possessions” (*se et sua*) to the hospital. S/he then received an item of clothing from the prior or minister of the hospital, invariably a pair of hose (*par caligarum*). The location of the ceremony was not the factor that determined the *conversa*'s identity, however, as shown by the fact that these ceremonies did not have to take place in a church. For instance, two women, Delaydina and Benvenuta, became *conversae* of the hospital of S. Lorenzo in 1350 in an oblation ceremony held in the “great

⁶⁹ In monasteries, the *conversus* was an individual who had made a religious vow to the institution as an adult. The *familiaris*, on the other hand, was an individual who lived outside the monastery but assisted it with donations. Cosimo Damiano Fonseca notes that the *familiares* in canonical communities, like those in monasteries, also lived outside the community and helped the administer its finances and property holdings. Fonseca, “I Conversi nelle Comunità Canonicali,” in *I Laici nella Societas Christiana dei secoli XI e XII*, 282. I am grateful to Isabelle Cochelin for explicating the differences between the two groups. On the status of the *conversus*, see the *Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique* (Paris, 1949) 575.

⁷⁰ Osheim, “Conversion, Conversi, and the Christian Life in Late Medieval Tuscany,” 371.

hall” of the hospital.⁷¹ This variation reveals that, as Osheim has argued, the promise of *se et sua* was the only essential feature of the *conversa*’s identity.

The dedication of property as the defining aspect of the *conversus*’ identity is also seen in the various rules about celibacy among the *conversi* in Bergamo’s hospitals. *Conversi* were only sometimes required to make promises of celibacy, and those who wished to marry were only sometimes required to leave the hospital. An example of the latter occurred in 1357 when a *conversus* named Zamborinus left the hospital of S. Antonio after he had decided to marry. As a result of this decision he would no longer be eligible to live as a *conversus*.⁷² The vow of celibacy may have been confined to those hospitals which, like S. Antonio, expected their members to live a quasi-monastic existence. Married *conversi* could and did join other hospitals, as in the case of Albertus de Payerolis and his wife Bergamina, and the later ministers of S. Vincenzo, Venderminus de Guascalla of Belluno, and his wife Catalina. Furthermore, *conversi* in some hospitals could marry after they joined the institutions. Several years after Bergamina died, Albertus de Payerolis married domina Bona, who became a *conversa* of S. Vincenzo after the marriage had been solemnized. Albertus and Bona governed S. Vincenzo together, and Bona continued to administer the institution after Albertus’ death in 1361.

While elements of the entrance ceremonies and promises of chastity on oblation likened some, but not all, *conversi* to religious, those becoming *familiares* were never subject to such restrictions. Their more flexible status was also reflected in entrance ceremonies in which a new *familiaris* was simply welcomed into the community by hospital officials and other residents. But hospitals’ expectations of the *familiaris*, like those of the *conversus*, were most clearly evident in the *familiares*’ donations of property to the hospital. *Familiares* promised to dedicate property to the hospital they joined, but they were not bound to promise all of their goods to the institution. In addition, *familiares* always ensured that they would retain control of the property promised to the hospital during their lives. When two friends, Marchisia della Fontana and Paxina de Menalla, became *familiares*

⁷¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–50) 349.

⁷² BCBg, PCB 464.

of the hospital of S. Vincenzo together in 1335, they each made an *inter vivos* donation to the hospital administrators of two gardens and a house, attaching the condition that the property would be available for “the use of the poor of the hospital” only after both women died.⁷³ Similarly, when Girarda de Nocha became a *familiaris* in the same year, she donated some land in the *vicinia* of S. Antonio to the hospital, but asked that the donation only take effect after her death.⁷⁴

The original intent behind creating the role of the *familiaris* seems to have been to ensure that some lay oblates would work with the sick. In its earliest days, the hospital of S. Vincenzo welcomed *familiars* who promised to work with the sick in return for a wage. So, in 1340, Albertus de Payarolis and his wife domina Bergamina entered S. Vincenzo as *familiars*. Both were charged with taking “good care” of hospital residents, and in return for their labor, the hospital agreed to provide them with 6 *lire* annually.⁷⁵ This income was supplemented by rental income from two pieces of property the couple gave to the MIA. During their lives they were to receive 8 *lire* each year from the property, which was to devolve to the hospital after their deaths.⁷⁶

Although initially hospitals in Bergamo created substantive distinctions between *conversi* and *familiars*, as the institutions developed during the fourteenth century fewer distinctions marked the two groups, especially if the individuals becoming *conversi* or *familiars* were women. Both *conversae* and female *familiars* were of a similar social rank. None of them came from the lowest strata of society, as evidenced by the fact that all had property to donate to the hospital when they joined it.⁷⁷ Most were also either unmarried or widowed. In addition, neither *conversae* nor female *familiars* actually gave up control of their property when they joined hospitals. Donation records created on the same day as the entrance ceremonies of many *conversae* in Bergamo reveal that their apparent outright donations of property normally came with *de futuro* conditions, allowing the women to

⁷³ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–35) 177–180.

⁷⁴ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 61.

⁷⁵ This is the only such agreement I have identified for any hospital in the city during the fourteenth century. Most *familiars* made no promises to work in hospitals on oblation.

⁷⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1340–41) 64.

⁷⁷ Osheim also argues that Tuscan *conversi* were more likely to be from wealthy, not poor backgrounds. “Conversion,” 378–380.

“enjoy” the income from the property during their lifetimes.⁷⁸ Domina Antonia de Sporzatica, who entered the hospital of S. Vincenzo as a *conversa* in 1337, stated her intention to donate *se et sua* to the hospital, but retained the usufruct of her property as part of an *inter vivos* bequest of land she made to hospital administrators. Furthermore, a year later she even sold a parcel of land to the officials for 61 *lire*, keeping the proceeds of the sale.⁷⁹ Other women directed portions of their property elsewhere on oblation. For example, on her entry into the hospital of S. Bernardo in 1336, Bona, the widow of Benedettus Foya, asked that one quarter of the proceeds of the sale of her house be given to her daughter Benedetta, perhaps so that the property might be used a dowry.⁸⁰

The one significant characteristic which continued to distinguish female *familiares* and *conversae* during the fourteenth century was their age. Women who joined hospitals as *familiares* were often young, while *conversae* tended to be elderly.⁸¹ For instance, Bergamina, the wife of Albertus de Payarolis, was still of child-bearing age five years before she became a *familiaris* of S. Vincenzo. At that time, her husband dictated a will naming any children she might bear by him as his principal heirs.⁸² As well, some women who joined hospitals as *familiares* later became *conversae*, and we can estimate the relative age of *conversae* and *familiares* entering the hospital from the records in which they appear. Marchisia della Fontana remained at S. Vincenzo as a *familiaris* for more than thirty years after she joined it in 1335, and then became a *conversa* before her death in 1370. In 1293, the newly-widowed domina Antonia de Sporzatica gave a donation to the confraternity of the Misericordia Maggiore in Bergamo, and then

⁷⁸ This was a condition used outside hospitals, too. Cosimo Damiano Fonseca notes that *conversi* in canonical communities also reserved themselves the usufruct of their properties on oblation. Fonseca, “I Conversi nella Comunità Canonicali,” 264. It is also important to note that *conversae* retained ownership of their movable property. See, for example, the document recording the entrance of two *conversae* to S. Vincenzo in 1340, in which it is stated that *bonis mobilibus quis nunc habunt vel in futurum habebunt . . . possint facere in vita et in morte quicquid eis placuerint*. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1340–41) 220.

⁷⁹ ASBg, Notarile G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1336–1340) 203.

⁸⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1336–1340) 18.

⁸¹ Duane Osheim suggests that *conversi* were normally married and elderly, but he admits that it is difficult to know their exact ages. Osheim, “Conversion,” 380.

⁸² ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 146–148.

44 years later she joined the hospital of S. Vincenzo as a *conversa*.⁸³ Oblation records also sometimes noted the age of the person entering the hospital. For instance, domina Doratha de Rosciate became a *conversa* of the hospital run by the *fabbrica* of S. Maria Maggiore in 1413, when, as she stated, she was over the age of 45.⁸⁴

Apart from their age, few other characteristics separated women joining hospitals as *conversae* and *familiares*. Indeed, evidence from numerous hospitals in Bergamo highlights the strong bonds of friendship among some of the women who belonged to the institutions. In the early part of the fourteenth century, women who became *conversae* or *familiares* in Bergamo's hospitals managed to create informal networks within the institutions for their own spiritual and social support. As noted previously, both *conversae* and *familiares* retained control of property whose income provided them with a living, and they also directed property to those in their families who needed it. In this way, women entering Bergamo's hospitals emphasized their autonomy within the institutions. Lay sisters further established their own communities in hospitals as they participated in property transactions with each other and members of the community.

Evidence of property dealings among residents of hospitals in Bergamo survives for the lively activities of women in the hospital of S. Vincenzo between the 1330s and the 1370s. Women joining S. Vincenzo freely bought, rented and sold land, houses, and animals during these years.⁸⁵ While transactions between these women and those living outside the hospital demonstrate how the institutions allowed women to retain their connections to the secular world even after oblation, business connections among the women themselves reveal how women organized their own hospital community in the mid-fourteenth century. From these transactions, we can see that relations among the women in S. Vincenzo were cordial and sometimes intimate, resembling those relationships that Judith Bennett has termed "lesbian-like," intimate bonds which existed outside the

⁸³ See her *pro anima* donation of alms to the MIA in 1293 in BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 214v and her entrance to S. Vincenzo in 1337 in BCBg, MIA perg. 7339.

⁸⁴ BCBg, MIA perg. 3520.

⁸⁵ See, for example, agreements between domina Caracosa de Sivernatis and Azaninus de Azano for pasturing animals belonging to Caracosa (ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–38) 193) and her later sale of those animals to the same man. (ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–38) 318).

conventional frameworks of marriage and childbearing.⁸⁶ Sometimes these friendships developed among women who met within the hospitals, at other times sisters or longstanding friends joined the institutions together.⁸⁷ Three examples of property deals among female inhabitants of the hospital of S. Vincenzo illustrate the diverse relationships which women established or maintained in hospitals.

The first couple, Anexia de Longullo and Carina de la Grumella, were close friends who probably lived in the hospital for some months before officially becoming *conversae* together in May, 1340. Their concern for each other was evident in their commitments of property when they joined the hospital.⁸⁸ Their initial promises of property to hospital officials included the condition that on the death of one woman, her friend would receive the usufruct of her estate for the duration of her life.⁸⁹ The women lived together inside the hospital, sharing a room and a kitchen, and buying and selling more property together, including a piece of land from a *familiares* of S. Vincenzo, Caracosa de Siveratis.⁹⁰ Their mutual dependence was acknowledged and accepted by the community. For instance, a few months before they officially joined the hospital, Vivianus, son of the late Teutaldus of S. Pellegrino, left the friends an annuity of 53 *soldi* in his will.⁹¹ The relationship ended on the death of Anexia in the early 1340s, but the memory of the friendship persisted. In her will, Anexia made Carina her “universal heir,” leaving Carina the use of her

⁸⁶ Bennett emphasizes that “sexual behavior is certainly important, but it need not be defining” for membership in either the category of “lesbian” or “lesbian-like.” “‘Lesbian-Like’ and the Social History of Lesbianisms,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9 (1–2) (2000) 16. Also see the remarks on identifying lesbians in the past in Martha Vicinus, “Lesbian History: All Theory and No Facts or All facts and No Theory?” in *Radical History Review* 60 (1994) 59. She remarks: “I find it ironic that ‘lesbianism’ continues to depend upon the evidence of sexual consummation, whereas heterosexuality is confirmed through a variety of diverse social formations” including, as she points out, relationships in which sexual consummation never occurs. My thanks to Adele Perry for this reference.

⁸⁷ The theme of friendship in a religious environment is the subject of several studies by Brian Patrick McGuire, including *Friendship and Community: the Monastic Experience* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1988). McGuire suggests that erotic friendships could exist without genital contact within monasteries.

⁸⁸ In the year before their oblation ceremony they were recorded collecting money together (see examples below) suggesting that their shared living arrangement was already in place.

⁸⁹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1340–41) 220–221.

⁹⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1340–41) 221.

⁹¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1340–41) 188–189.

estate after the rest of her bequests were given to others.⁹² Carina continued to live in the hospital until her death sometime in the late 1350s, collecting rent on the property that she and Anexia had owned jointly.⁹³

The case of two other women, Marchisia della Fontana and Girarda de Nocha, *familiares* of S. Vincenzo in the 1340s, illustrates how women who became friends while in the hospital also developed close relationships. Marchisia joined S. Vincenzo in 1335 with her friend Paxina de Menalla, but Paxina died soon afterwards. In the early 1340s Marchisia and Girarda, who had also joined S. Vincenzo in the mid-1330s, began collecting rent jointly on a vineyard which Girarda had promised to the hospital on her death. Their agreement to share the income on the vineyard—close to 10 *lire* annually—suggests that they had pooled their resources and were making a life together within the hospital. Girarda died in the mid-1340s, and while her testamentary bequests did not mention Marchisia, other records show that she left her friend the right to continue collecting the income from the vineyard. Through the 1340s and 50s, Marchisia continued to rent the property herself, collecting both cash and two containers of grapes from the harvest each year, and stipulating the number of vines to be planted on the land. In the final redaction of her will in 1359, Marchisia promised the lifetime use of the property to her sister Iacoba, while acknowledging the hospital's claim to ownership of it.⁹⁴

Siblings also joined hospitals together. The sisters Gisla and Caracosa de Sivernatis both became *familiares* of S. Vincenzo in the 1330s, and records of their property arrangements both jointly and separately suggest that within the hospital they were able to live together securely and comfortably. Gisla, the daughter of the late Ambrosius de Sivernatis, lived at S. Vincenzo in the 1320s and 30s, although she did not become an official oblate of the institution until 1335.⁹⁵ In 1335, several years after she had entered S. Vincenzo, Gisla's

⁹² For the rental agreement with Caracosa de Sivernatis, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1338–1340) 223–224. For Anexia's will see, ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1343) 66–67.

⁹³ She also donated property to the MIA later in her life, in 1355. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 11 (1355) 153–155.

⁹⁴ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 12 (1358–59) 358–361.

⁹⁵ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 22–24.

sister Caracosa joined her in the hospital. Caracosa's arrival marked a change in Gisla's status within the institution, since the sisters became *familiares* of the hospital together.⁹⁶ On the same day as their oblation ceremony, Gisla made a will in which she named her sister as her universal heir. She also left 50 *lire* to S. Vincenzo on condition that it was invested in land and the income from the investment was given annually to Caracosa for the rest of her life.⁹⁷ Gisla probably died in 1339, but Caracosa continued to live in the hospital until her death in 1352 or 1353. In the years following her sister's death Caracosa lived on the income she earned from property that she bought in 1339 with Gisla's bequest and an investment of her own money.⁹⁸

Moving beyond records of property transactions between women living together in the hospitals, we can use testamentary bequests to trace the broader networks of women that grew up within the institutions. Domina Marchisia della Fontana, who was a resident of S. Vincenzo for at least 35 years, made three wills during her time in the hospital.⁹⁹ In each of those documents, she left small bequests for female members of the hospital. In her 1336 will, she promised a gold florin to the *familiaris* Caracosa de Siveratis.¹⁰⁰ In her later wills, she also made bequests to paupers in the hospital. In 1359, she promised a desk or trunk to a woman called Mafia who lived in the hospital, and in the same will she made a bequest of one part of the feathers from her bed to Semperbella, another female inhabitant of the hospital.¹⁰¹ Similarly, domina Girarda de Nocha left furniture for a woman called Carina from the hospital in her 1343 will.¹⁰² Testamentary bequests by women living in Bergamo's hospitals also reveal that the women maintained ties with their families and friends outside the institutions. Girarda de Nocha reserved her greatest expression of concern in her will for two brothers,

⁹⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–35) 146.

⁹⁷ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–35) 144–145.

⁹⁸ For examples of transactions that Caracosa was involved in, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1338–1340) 207–210 and 237–239 and ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 11 (1352–54) 186.

⁹⁹ For her last appearance in the documents in 1370, see BCBg, MIA perg. 10 839.

¹⁰⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–38) 366–368.

¹⁰¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 12 (1358–59) 360.

¹⁰² ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1343) 125.

Iohannes and Recuperatus, sons of the late Recuperatus de Ragazzis and domina Domeniga. Girarda asked that if their mother died, the boys be taken in by the minister of S. Vincenzo and brought up within the hospital. Domina Marchisia left all of her property to the MIA, a condition of her status as a *conversa*, but she ensured that her sister Iacoba would retain the usufruct of it during her life.¹⁰³

The preceding evidence suggests not only that membership in hospitals allowed women to make sound investments, but also that women saw hospitals as places where they could enjoy the companionship of other women, both friends and sisters. At the same time, the women retained their networks of family and friends outside the hospitals. The unusual relationships, secular concerns, and financial enterprises of *conversae* and *familiares* appear to have developed with the tacit approval of male hospital officials. During the middle of the century, officials did not openly comment on the women's activities within the institutions, suggesting that hospitals in Bergamo at this time were female-friendly spaces.

To this point, we have examined more about the experiences of women than men in Bergamo's hospitals. Male *conversi* are more elusive in the records than their female counterparts. They do not seem to have invested their property in the community once they entered hospitals, nor did they enter hospitals in the company of other men. From time to time they joined confraternities or served as witnesses of notarized acts, but unless they served as hospital administrators, they lived more privately than *conversae*. However, while male *conversi* remained in the background of hospitals in Bergamo during the fourteenth century, by the early fifteenth century the institutions became the preserve of men, in particular confraternity officials and clerics. As secular and ecclesiastical authorities began to call for the purification and professionalization of hospitals, officials of Bergamo's hospitals placed the lay communities within the institutions under closer control. Although all *conversi*, both male and female, came under scrutiny, evidence suggests both that lay women became particular targets of this reform movement and that they, more than their male counterparts, ceased to join hospitals in significant numbers.

¹⁰³ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 12 (1358–59) 358.

Hospital reform in the late fourteenth century

In a court case in 1370 which the *conversi* of the hospital of S. Lorenzo brought against their minister, Frater Ziliolus de Feracavallis, the court heard from two poor men whose brief testimony sheds light on the desire of paupers for assistance from hospitals as well as on the changing concerns of ecclesiastical authorities about the way hospitals were run.¹⁰⁴ The first man, Bonafides, told the court that he had lived in the hospital for several months in 1370. During that time, he stated, Ziliolus had not given him anything to eat or drink, and the bed on which he slept had been furnished with torn, filthy sheets. Bonafides also claimed that Ziliolus had told him to leave the hospital, since he did not want to give him any aid. A second poor resident of the hospital, Antonius, whose nickname was Ruffinus, reported that “a good man” who lived in the hospital had died because no one had given him any food or other necessities. Ruffinus also stated that he had been told he would have to buy the sheets for his bed. Finally, he alleged that Ziliolus had threatened to beat him.¹⁰⁵ These two men had approached the hospital of S. Lorenzo expecting to receive food, drink, and a clean, comfortable place to sleep. When they did not find the support they sought, they spoke out publicly against the man whom they deemed responsible for the problem. This situation might have occurred many times in the past, but it was only in the latter half of the century that ecclesiastical officials began to investigate the treatment of the poor within hospitals in Bergamo.

Throughout Italian cities in the later fourteenth century and after, civic and ecclesiastical authorities consolidated small hospitals into large institutions and gave them a mandate to provide professional medical care to the entire community.¹⁰⁶ In many cities in northern

¹⁰⁴ For the court record, see ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 189r–203v.

¹⁰⁵ ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 190v and 191v.

¹⁰⁶ On the centralization of medieval hospitals throughout the West, see Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) 282–286. On the history of hospitals in Lombardy during the fifteenth century, see Giuliana Albini, “Sugli ospedali in area padana nel Quattrocento,” and “La Riforma Quattrocentesca degli ospedali nel ducato di Milano,” in *Carità e Governo delle Povertà (secoli XII–XV)*, 231–252 and 253–266. Also see her *Città e ospedali nella Lombardia medievale* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1993). Still on Lombardy, see Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice*, 202–206,

Italy, hospital restructuring was accompanied by the establishment of *provveditori di sanità*—guardians of public health—to oversee the medical profession and prevent outbreaks of plague.¹⁰⁷ These changes were preceded by several decades of reform measures designed to bring hospitals more effectively under the control of civic and ecclesiastical authorities. In Bergamo during the fifteenth century this process culminated in the absorption of eleven small hospitals in Bergamo into one large institution. This “Great Hospital of San Marco” was to be administered by the MIA at the request of both the bishop and the Venetian governors of the city.¹⁰⁸ As elsewhere on the Italian peninsula, the governors of the new hospital argued that the charitable efforts of the small institutions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had been marred by the “negligence” of their staff and the “misgovernment of the many men who [we]re necessary to run them.”¹⁰⁹

One of the first steps on the road to large-scale changes to Bergamo’s hospital structure was the MIA’s attempt to assume greater control of the hospitals it had helped to govern during the fourteenth century. Hospitals such as S. Vincenzo were increasingly controlled by the MIA after the middle of the century. In the early 1360s, officials of the MIA elected legal representatives (*sindics* and *proctors*) of the hospitals of S. Vincenzo and S. Alessandro every year at the same time as it elected its own officials.¹¹⁰ As well, the duties of MIA officials as set out each year in the documents recording the confraternity’s elections included “the election of administrators of the hospitals.”¹¹¹ The minister of the hospital was not necessarily an official of the confraternity, but by selecting legal representatives for

esp. 204. On the effects of centralization in other Italian cities and an argument for the “secularization” of hospitals after the Middle Ages, see Emilio Nasalli Rocca, *Il Diritto Ospedaliero nei suoi Lineamenti Storici* (Milano: Biblioteca della Rivista di storia del diritto Italiano, 20, 1956) 79–94.

¹⁰⁷ On these officials, see Carlo Cipolla, *Public Health and the Medical Profession in the Renaissance* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

¹⁰⁸ Although founding documents dated the creation of the new hospital to 1457, the hospital building was not begun until 1474. Maria Mencaroni Zoppetti, ed. *L’Ospedale nella città: Vicende Storiche e architettoniche della Casa Grande di S. Marco* (Bergamo: Fondazione per la Storia economica e Sociale di Bergamo, 2002) 39.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, 204.

¹¹⁰ For examples of such elections for the early 1360s, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Mozzi, busta 84a, 89–91 and 84b, 20–21.

¹¹¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Mozzi, busta 84b, 175.

the hospital and by selecting its administrators, the MIA articulated the strength of its commitment and its bond to the hospitals under its control.

Aside from asserting greater control over S. Vincenzo, the MIA's officials also sought to create a great centralized hospital with private funds during the later decades of the fourteenth century. In 1361, the minister of the MIA, Petrus de Rosciate, son of Alberico, made a will in which he left much of his estate to be used to found a hospital dedicated to the Virgin Mary in which the poor, and especially "the noble poor," would be "raised and educated."¹¹² Unlike earlier hospital founders, who usually did not stipulate how the institutions they funded were to be organized, Petrus took care to describe how this hospital should be run. He instructed its administrators—members of the MIA and his family—to send a "worthy" man to the city of Siena to gather information about the way in which that city's great hospital was administered, and then to use that model as a template for the administration of the hospital in Bergamo. The hospital in Siena was a large institution with a long history of serving the city and diocese, and in the early 1360s it was in the process of absorbing smaller hospitals in the region into its organization. In emulating it, then, it appears that Petrus was contemplating establishing a "Great Hospital" in Bergamo at that time.¹¹³

When they cited the corruption of individual hospital officials as a reason for the consolidation of the institutions, reformers were most likely alluding to individuals like Ziliolus de Feracavallis, the minister of S. Lorenzo, who in the previously-mentioned 1370 court case was accused of denying the poor food and shelter, threatening to kill his fellow brothers, and having a sexual affair with a woman in the hospital. Ziliolus had been a *conversus* of S. Lorenzo since the 1360s, but he had also cultivated connections with the rest of the ecclesiastical community.¹¹⁴ That community itself was also beset by rivalry and accusations of corruption during this period. The protocols of notaries who worked for the bishop and cathedral chapters during

¹¹² ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 235–241.

¹¹³ On the changes to the Sieneese hospital, see Cohn, *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death*, 44. There are no indications in the archival record that the hospital in Bergamo was ever built.

¹¹⁴ See the appearance of Ziliolus as a witness (identified as a *conversus* of S. Lorenzo) in the notarial registers of Teutaldus de Casteniate, ACVBg, CAP 31 (T. de Casteniate) 207r.

that period contain many references to fights between ecclesiastics over issues of church reform as well as personal antipathies. Ziliolus was involved in at least one dramatic fight, when, one day in 1370, he went to the cathedral of S. Alessandro to act as a witness for a document prepared by the notary Teutaldus de Castegnate on the request of the canon Ardigolus de Udrigio. Ziliolus reported that he saw the canon talking with Petrus Ceste, the *prepositus* of the cathedral, inside the church. When the canon called for the notary to take the document he had in his hand, the *prepositus* began to run away, and the canon grabbed his clothing and the two men began to fight. Unlike most of the other witnesses, who concentrated on the dramatic confrontation between the two clerics, including the “injurious words” they spoke and the way they pushed each other on the stairs of the cathedral, Ziliolus’s testimony described the places in the cathedral where the fight had begun. He told the court that the two men were initially standing in front of “that sculptured figure of the bishop above the marble stone” and that they then moved from that place to the doors of the church, towards the lobby or *claustrulo*. His narrative, with its emphasis on the physical layout of the cathedral and its knowledgeable description of the status of the individuals present in the church, reveals to us a man who was familiar with the sacred realm, suggesting that he, too, was an entrenched part of the religious landscape of Bergamo.¹¹⁵

Ziliolus’s close connection with the ecclesiastical world made him an object of scrutiny, especially during a time of reform. Through the late 1360s and early 1370s, the ecclesiastical authorities, to whom S. Lorenzo was subject, began to criticize his activities as minister of the hospital.¹¹⁶ According to witnesses from both the clergy and the lay community, Ziliolus kept a mistress in S. Lorenzo and demonstrated an increasingly uncaring attitude to its poor residents and its oblates. They also charged him with having ignored the commands of the bishop’s vicar to desist from mishandling the funds of the hospital.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, a *conversus* of the hospital, Morescus, charged

¹¹⁵ See ACVBg, CAP 46 (F. Zenaglia) 134r.

¹¹⁶ On the subjection of S. Lorenzo to the church, see ACVBg, CAP 46 (F. Zenaglia) 16r.

¹¹⁷ The witnesses included *conversi* from the hospital, members of the clergy, the hospital’s poor inhabitants, and men and women from the neighborhood of S. Lorenzo.

that Ziliolus had threatened his life, driving him from the hospital and forcing him to live by begging. Through his mismanagement of the hospital, witnesses charged, Ziliolus had also caused the deaths of some of the paupers living there, and had brought the hospital close to financial disaster and spiritual bankruptcy.

While actions taken against Ziliolus reflect a growing sense of the need for reform of hospital administration in the fourteenth century, by ridding hospitals of Ziliolus and his ilk, hospital administrators also set in motion a larger series of changes which impacted hospitals across Italy and western Europe. These involved reimagining the hospital as a male-dominated space in which women played a limited role. For the duration of the Middle Ages, ecclesiastical and secular authorities alike frequently evinced negative attitudes to women, portraying them as sexually insatiable and unstable. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, clerical and civic authorities throughout Italy constructed women's morality around their submissiveness to patriarchal authority, arguing forcefully that so-called good women should take only a limited role in public life, and instead remain within their households as much as possible. Fears about the power of women to create disorder, especially within the religious realm, also became more pronounced in this period.¹¹⁸ The intersection of this hostile view of women's autonomy with calls for hospital reform led authorities to scrutinize and criticize the former roles women had played within hospitals.¹¹⁹ Ultimately, reforming officials came to asso-

¹¹⁸ For a general discussion of the perception that all women were in thrall to their sexual desires and were thus potential agents of disorder see Ruth Mazo Karras, "Sexuality in the Middle Ages," in Peter Linehan and Janet Nelson, eds., *The Medieval World*, (London: Routledge, 2001) 279–293, esp. 289. Katherine Jansen discusses the connection between fears of women's sexuality and attempts to control women within the religious realm. See *The Making of the Magdalen*, 168–196. Also see Michael Rocke's "Gender and Sexual Culture in Renaissance Italy," in Judith C. Brown and Robert C. Davis, eds., *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy* (London: Longman, 1998) 153. Brenda Bolton has argued that associations of religious women met with ecclesiastical hostility during the later Middle Ages because women were thought to "inevitably contribute to indiscipline," adding that "as the church became increasingly institutionalized so it was less able to tolerate any disruptive force in its midst." Bolton, "Mulieres Sanctae," in Susan Mosher Stuard, ed. *Women in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976) 143.

¹¹⁹ For a further example of authorities' attempts to control religious women on the Italian peninsula, see Mario Sensi's study of ecclesiastical attitudes to female penitents in central Italy in "Anchoresses and Penitents in Thirteenth and Fourteenth-Century Umbria," in Rusconi and Bornstein, eds. *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, 57–83.

ciate women's autonomy in hospitals with the corruption and negligent leadership of the institutions of the pre-reform period. In Bergamo, likely in response to these changes, in the last years of the fourteenth century very few women joined the city's hospitals as *conversae* and no women became *familiares*, even though hospitals themselves remained significant pious and social sites in the city and male *conversi* remained active within them.¹²⁰

The specific case of S. Lorenzo provides a view of the effect of some of these changing attitudes on hospital communities in Bergamo. The case against Ziliolus included the testimony of witnesses from in and around the hospital who were also critical of the activities of a woman named Andriola da Culzinate, whom they called Ziliolus's mistress. They argued that she was responsible for some of the damage to the hospital, since she had tempted Ziliolus into neglecting his duties. It is not clear whether Andriola had ever joined the hospital in a formal act of oblation, but such a situation was not unprecedented. Other women, too, as noted previously, had lived in the city's hospitals before officially becoming members of the institutions. Furthermore, Ziliolus stated that Andriola had an official role to play in the hospital: she was responsible for transacting the hospital's "business" (*negotia*). Others indirectly supported this claim by telling the court that they had seen Andriola engaging in tasks such as helping with the wine harvest on the hospital's properties.¹²¹ But according to the witnesses, including male administrators of the hospital, members of the clergy, the hospital's poor residents, and men and women from the neighborhood of S. Lorenzo, Andriola's greed had led to the ruin of the hospital and the departure of its poor residents. Witness after witness stated that Andriola had defrauded the hospital for her own financial benefit. As one woman complained, "she sells the goods of the hospital and makes money from them, and then keeps the money for herself."¹²² A pauper living in the hospital told the court that Andriola had forced him to buy the sheets for his bed. Others complained that Andriola cooked meat for herself and Ziliolus without sharing it with either the *conversi* or the poor.¹²³

¹²⁰ See, for instance, records from the hospital of S. Vincenzo between 1370 and 1399 in ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117a, 416–424; busta 117b, 423–425; busta 118a, 432–434. None mention *conversae* or *familiares*.

¹²¹ ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 189r–203v.

¹²² ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 191r.

¹²³ ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 191v.

But the witnesses' most damning criticism of Andriola was that she was the minister's "lover and concubine." Ziliolus apparently made no secret of his affair with Andriola. One *conversus* of S. Lorenzo told the court he had seen the two having sex "many times" in the hospital and outside, while another reported that Ziliolus had said he had had sexual intercourse with the woman "twice on Holy Saturday" one year.¹²⁴ Andriola, these witnesses suggested, was as responsible as Ziliolus for the affair and the resulting spiritual and moral deterioration it brought to the hospital. They depicted her as a powerful force who had used her sexual relationship with Ziliolus to manipulate him into turning the poor away from the hospital's doors so that he might live alone with her. As a result, the witnesses charged, one man had died and several others had nearly starved.¹²⁵ Others claimed that Andriola, acting alone, had further contaminated the hospital through her sexual transgressions. For instance, one witness accused Andriola of running a brothel within the walls of the hospital. She claimed that Andriola had a secret door built into the rear of the hospital which gave access to a "pretty room" where she invited men and women "to do evil."¹²⁶

The witnesses' detailed descriptions of Andriola's activities suggests that in the later fourteenth century, members of the community commonly scrutinized hospitals and their residents—perhaps paying special attention to female residents. As well, the witnesses' willingness to blame Andriola for Ziliolus' misdeeds hints at a broader concern about the power of women's sexuality to lead men astray and thus damage the hospital.¹²⁷ There is no direct evidence to support the conclusion that witnesses or officials saw Andriola as the extreme version of all female inhabitants of the hospital. However, other evidence does support the view that as they sought to centralize hospitals, officials and members of the community restricted women's autonomy in the institutions at the end of the fourteenth century.

Evidence from early fifteenth century oblation records suggests that concerns about the use of hospitals as sites for shelter and companionship for the wealthy grew during that period. Specifically, as

¹²⁴ ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 194r.

¹²⁵ ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 191v/192r.

¹²⁶ ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 191r.

¹²⁷ At the same time, Ziliolus was punished for his actions. He lost his status as both minister and *conversus*. Donation records to the hospital in 1372 show that he had left the hospital. See ACVBg, CAP 32 (T. de Casteniate) unfoliated.

they redefined the status of lay oblates, hospital officials implicitly criticized their lack of engagement with the poor and sick in the institutions. Officials now expected *conversi* to work within hospitals. For example, when domina Doratha da Rosciate became a *conversa* of the hospital of the *fabbrica* of S. Maria Maggiore in 1413, the officials of the hospital noted that she was a good, worthy and honest person, adding that the hospital admitted only lay people of upright character so that it would not be exposed to harm. But Doratha's good character was not the only focus of officials' concern. They also emphasized that she was joining the hospital to work (*ad deservendum*), and that she was "necessary to the hospital."¹²⁸ As early as 1361, Petrus de Rosciate's testamentary instructions on the foundation of a hospital dedicated to the Virgin Mary also accentuated the need for professionalism in the hospital. To this end, he stated twice that the hospital servants would "raise and educate" the institution's poor clientele.¹²⁹ The redefinition of the hospital as an institution staffed by worthy servants was markedly different from its former incarnation as a site where property-holding individuals—mostly women—could find shelter without necessarily taking an active role in serving the poor or sick. By stressing the need for oblates to work, officials also rejected the role that most women had played within hospitals during the fourteenth century.

The gradual decline in the number of male and female *conversi* on the Italian peninsula (in both hospitals and monasteries) during the fourteenth century has been linked to the rise of other religious options for the laity—namely, the growing popularity of confraternities.¹³⁰ But analysis of the experiences of women within hospitals in Bergamo suggests otherwise. The continued decline in their numbers in the fifteenth century was more likely the result of an attempt by authorities to professionalize hospitals, which in turn led to a related rejection of the roles which women had formerly played in the institutions, rather than the women's desire to seek new spiritual opportunities elsewhere.¹³¹

¹²⁸ The document reads in part: . . . *dominam Doratham condam domini Zoanotti de Roxiate esse bonam et ydoneam ac honestam personam et necessariam dicto hospitali ad deservendum in dicto hospitali et cupientes ipsum hospitale bonus et honestis personis populare, ne ipsum hospitale detrimentum et lesionem patiatur* . . . BCBg, MIA perg. 3520.

¹²⁹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 240.

¹³⁰ Osheim, "Conversion," 389.

¹³¹ In the 1380's, when the hospital of S. Vincenzo expanded by buying several

The narrowing opportunities for women in Bergamo's hospitals during the fourteenth century were part of a broader set of concerns about women's religious activities held by authorities in the church and the secular realm. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, women, both religious and lay, were subjected to increasing restrictions on their pious and social activities. In the thirteenth century, for instance, ecclesiastical authorities throughout Europe restricted the autonomy of nuns, notably with the publication of the papal bull *Periculoso* in 1298, which called for the strict enclosure of nuns in monastic houses.¹³² As well, changes to ecclesiastical and theological organization placed new controls on lay women in the thirteenth century and from that time on. As Dyan Elliott has argued, the new emphasis on the need for regular individual confession after Lateran IV disempowered lay women by placing them in a subservient relationship to their male confessors.¹³³ Furthermore, clerics attempted to restrict women's access to sacred spaces, for instance barring women from entry into the chancels of English churches in the fifteenth century.¹³⁴ In Bergamo, as ecclesiastical and secular authorities worked to restructure hospitals according to a professional model, they came to associate women with the hospitals of the fourteenth century, those loosely-organized groups whose members enjoyed a significant level of autonomy. In the reformed institutions of the fifteenth century, oblates were scrutinized more closely and were required to submit to the authority of hospital officials. In practice, this meant that women could no longer turn to hospitals to find the companionship and security they had formerly found there.

houses around it, documents mentioning *conversae* or *familiares* had all but disappeared from the notarial instrumenta. See ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b 423–425.

¹³² On efforts to control nuns, see Johnson, "The Cloistering of Medieval Nuns" in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992) 39 and idem, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 252. On *Periculoso*, see Elizabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and its Commentators, 1298–1545* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997).

¹³³ See Elliott, "Women and Confession: From Empowerment to Pathology," in Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds. *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Cornell University Press, 2003) 31–51.

¹³⁴ Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 19.

PART TWO

CHARITY AND CHURCH

PART TWO: CHARITY AND CHURCH

In the first two chapters of this study, we saw how two of the most important lay religious associations in Bergamo, confraternities and hospitals, became closely linked to civic social and political structures during the fourteenth century. As a result, those institutions narrowed the opportunities for women and low-status men within them. While social divisions within these institutions thus became more apparent in the fourteenth century, we also saw that confraternities retained an emphasis on the spiritual unity and equality of all members.

This section moves away from a description of the structure of lay religious institutions to examine specific lay religious activities and relationships. Chapter Three focuses on almsgiving, and it begins by investigating the changes made to the MIA's charitable program. The chapter then explores the responses of the poor to those changes, arguing that paupers evinced multiple responses to modifications to almsgiving by the MIA. Chapter Four examines the relationship between lay people and the clergy in Bergamo. Here we see that throughout the fourteenth century, some lay men—especially those of high social status—found ways to work with the clergy through instruments of ecclesiastical authority such as the episcopal court, while women, in particular, did not have the same access as men to that body. Both chapters argue that lay women and poor men were increasingly assigned a passive role within public lay religious culture. However, in both chapters we also see examples of individuals who sought—implicitly or explicitly—to shape religious institutions to suit their own pious and social needs.

CHAPTER THREE

ALMS FOR THE POOR! CONFRATERNAL CHARITY AND THE POOR

Throughout the fourteenth century, confraternities in western Europe reshaped the charity they offered the poor, streamlining their methods of distributing alms, offering more specialized assistance, and increasing the number of paupers they served. In part these changes resulted from a desire to respond to the new perceptions of social problems which emerged in late medieval cities, but they were also motivated by a desire to ensure that the recipients of confraternal charity fit into a moral framework that was acceptable to confraternity officials. The focus of this chapter is both on how the MIA, the largest and wealthiest confraternity in Bergamo, implemented these changes and on how paupers themselves responded to them.¹ I argue that some paupers, namely those of high social status, fought the confraternity to be recognized as needy after the MIA refused to provide them with the assistance they sought. The working poor, on the other hand, did not offer such challenges to the confraternity, even as it sought to organize them into groups to streamline the almsgiving process. The responses of the poor to confraternal

¹ Historians have tended to discount the possibility of studying the responses of the poor to charity because of a perceived lack of documentation. For instance, of the poor assisted by the Buonomini di San Martino in Florence, Dale Kent remarks that “there is little direct evidence of the response of recipients of charity to the initiatives of these shapers of their spiritual and social lives.” Kent, “The Buonomini di San Martino: Charity for the ‘glory of God, the honour of the city, and the commemoration of myself,’” in Francis Ames-Lewis, ed. *Cosimo “il Vecchio” de’ Medici, 1389–1464: Essays in Commemoration of the 600th Anniversary of Cosimo de’ Medici’s Birth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) 50. Attention to the responses of the poor to charity is more common in modern studies of poverty. In *All Our Kin*, an examination of ties among poor African-American families in the urban Midwest during the late 1960s, Carol Stack presents the subjects of her inquiry as active agents searching for ways to cope with crushing poverty. She argues that the poor families she studied developed “proven strategies for survival” throughout their lives. Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974). The work of Sharon Farmer has recently set a new standard for studies of poverty in medieval Europe. See Farmer, *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris: Gender, Ideology, and the Daily Lives of the Poor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

charitable programs provide a valuable insight into the effect of the changing religious and social climate of late medieval Europe on those who were excluded from public religious culture.²

Scholars agree that there were several types of poverty in medieval Europe: that of beggars, another of low-income working people, and still another of higher-status people whose incomes did not allow them to live at their accustomed social rank, the so-called 'shame-faced poor' or *poveri vergognosi*. Attitudes to paupers were complex during the Middle Ages, since the poor were seen as divinely favoured even as they were socially marginalized. Paupers were spiritually blessed in their relation to Christ. The concept of Christ as a pauper who invited others to divest themselves of their possessions and follow him was one of the unifying concepts of Christendom. Because of the special relationship between the poor and Christ, assistance for paupers—comprising feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, clothing the naked, and sheltering the homeless—composed the bulk of the seven corporal works of mercy within Christianity.³ But while the poor were spiritually important to Christian society, and theologians argued that the pauper had the right to steal to keep himself from dying of hunger,⁴ the realities of poverty provoked anxiety rather than concern in early medieval society. For instance, Michel Mollat has described a decree of the sixth-century council of Macon which "forbade bishops to surround themselves with dogs in order to keep paupers away."⁵

² A fundamental synthetic study of poverty in the Middle Ages is Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History*. For criticism of the approach taken by Mollat and other historians of medieval poverty, see Sharon Farmer, "Down and Out and Female in Thirteenth-Century Paris," *American Historical Review* 103 (April 1998) 347–348. Besides Mollat's work, studies of poverty in the Middle Ages include Bronislaw Geremek's *Poverty: A History* trans. Agnieszka Kolakowska (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994) and Sharon Farmer's *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris*. Italian scholars have also undertaken significant studies of poverty on the peninsula during the Middle Ages. See the essays in Ovidio Capitani, ed., *La concezione della povertà nel Medioevo* (Bologna: Patron, 1974). Also see *La Conversione alla Povertà nell'Italia dei secoli XII–XIV* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 1991), *La Carità a Milano nei secoli XII–XIV* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1989), and *Città e Servizi Sociali*. Charles-Marie de la Roncière's work has illuminated the situation of the working poor. See "Pauvres et Pauvreté à Florence au XIV siècle" in Michel Mollat, ed. *Etudes sur l'Histoire de la Pauvreté jusqu'au XVI siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1974) 661–745.

³ The works of mercy were codified at seven during the twelfth century. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe*, 29.

⁴ Gilles Couvreur, *Les pauvres ont-ils des droits?: Recherche sur le vol en cas d'extrême nécessité depuis la concordia de Gratien (1140) jusqu'à Guillaume d'Auxerre (1231)* (Rome, 1961).

⁵ Mollat, *Poor in the Middle Ages*, 29.

Social attitudes towards the poor became more caring during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This was a period which has been defined as one of a “conversion to poverty,” referring both to the adoption of a concept of religious or apostolic poverty as a road to salvation, and to the need to care for the paupers living in one’s own community.⁶ This conversion was motivated by a shift within both the Church and lay society towards “apostolic action” and away from the religious ideal of contemplation, as well as by the concept, elaborated by canonists in the twelfth century and after, that the poor had rights to assistance.⁷ During this time, the concept of the virtuous pauper, whose poverty placed him or her close to Christ, emerged as one of the key *topoi* of Christian thought.⁸

During the thirteenth century, the MIA’s charitable program reflected the influence of these ideas about poverty and the poor as it engaged in regular almsgiving visits to paupers inside and outside Bergamo. Much of our information about the MIA’s charity at this time comes to us in the form of an almsgiving customary (*consuetudo*) created by the confraternity in 1293. This document reveals details about the type of alms the confraternity planned to distribute each month.⁹ By the end of the thirteenth century, alms included wine, money, grain or bread, salt, and occasionally a type of stuffed pastry called *fladones*. The customary also described the amount of alms the MIA should distribute on each visit. For instance, the document stated that the officials should allocate between 140 and 210 liters of wine to each city quarter (each quarter was made up of five or six *vicinie*), and between 70 and 140 liters to various city suburbs per visit.¹⁰ These amounts were substantial; the confraternity’s monthly distributions would total more than 16,000 liters of wine handed out to the poor annually. On these monthly rounds, confraternity officials

⁶ See the essays in *La Conversione alla Povertà nell’Italia dei secoli XII–XIV*.

⁷ Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages*, 99.

⁸ Edith Pasztor, “Esperienze di Povertà al Femminile,” in *La Conversione alla Povertà*, 369–389.

⁹ The record stated that it was to be used by the cellarer (*canevarius*) of each gate of the city, see BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 218v.

¹⁰ Two of the cellarers, those from the gates of S. Alessandro and S. Lorenzo, were told to take 60 *denari* on each visit. They were also to equip themselves with forty-six loaves of bread made from forty-eight bushels of grain, two *brente* (measuring a total of 130 liters) of wine and a *salera*, or salt-cellar, full of salt. If the charitable visit was more limited, for instance involving only the sick, then one *brenta* of wine (70 liters) and 60 *denari* would suffice. BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 218v.

aided those traditionally considered poor: widows, orphans, the shame-faced poor, the infirm, prisoners, and members of religious orders.

Aside from the amounts and type of alms issued, the *consuetudo* also reveals the confraternity's concern with distributing alms as widely as possible. Each cellarer gave alms to the poor from each *vicinia* within the quarter of the city which he represented. Officials also visited the outlying areas of Borgo Pignollo and Plorzano, outside the walls of the upper city, and S. Vigillio, Broseta and Valtezze (Valle Tegetis), areas to the north and west of the upper city. Records of the confraternity's expenses reveal that, in keeping with the precepts set down in the customary, throughout the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the cellarers continued to make their almsgiving visits regularly. Records dating from 1282, for instance, show that these outings, or *andata*, took place that year in every month but May.¹¹ These visits continued, as demonstrated in the records of 1326 when the cellarers undertook several *andata* every month.

In addition, certain feast days, such as that known as the "Sunday of Lazarus," the fifth Sunday of Lent, also became a regular occasion for almsgiving. On that Sunday MIA officials travelled a few kilometers out of the city to a monastery in the Astino valley, where they gave 1 *denarius* to each individual who came seeking alms. In 1326 officials dispensed more than 8 *lire* in total on their visit to Astino, meaning that almost two thousand individuals received alms from the confraternity that day.¹² The feast day on which the confraternity spent the most in alms distributions was Easter. The confraternity always undertook a general visit to the poor on Easter Sunday, doling out money and other alms to the poor inside and outside the city. The amounts spent on these visits increased over time. In 1280, officials spent just over 5 *lire* in total on alms for paupers inside and outside the city,¹³ while twenty years later they spent 20 *lire*, as well as 10 *lire* for salt.¹⁴

The MIA's charitable program was shaped in these early years by its intimate knowledge of its poor clients. The methods the con-

¹¹ The records of these *andata* are in BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 41r–44r.

¹² In 1328 the amount the MIA distributed during the same *andata* was even higher, totalling more than 9 *lire* which could have been distributed to more than 2100 individuals. For entries, see the unfoliated register for that year in BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis.

¹³ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 9r.

¹⁴ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 347v–348r.

fraternity used for identifying potential clients and the identity of those it served are best seen in a lengthy document describing a charitable donation to a large number of people in 1282. In the early 1280s, dominus Gracius de Pappis left a testamentary legacy to his brother Bonaventure, instructing Bonaventure to give the money to the MIA. The confraternity used this money to buy cloth for the poor, and the *canevarius* kept a record of those who received the cloth.¹⁵ Two hundred and seven people living in each of the *vicinie* of Bergamo and seventy-six living in the regions outside the city received cloth from the MIA on this occasion. In order to find the recipients for this donation the confraternity relied on its members' awareness of need in their neighborhoods. Two members of the MIA from each of the city's *vicinie* identified ten paupers from their neighborhood.¹⁶ The connection between these confraternity members and the poor clients was close; some of the needy even lived in the house of a member involved in the *andata*.¹⁷ That the recipients of this charity were associated with particular *vicinie* also suggests that they had a fixed dwelling in those areas. Other medieval confraternities, such as the Orsanmichele of Florence, placed significant emphasis on giving alms to those who had a stable place to live so that they knew where to bring their alms offerings and could gather information about the individual receiving their charity.¹⁸

The suggestion that many of the urban poor who received the cloth from the MIA either owned or rented their own homes, and thus shared a similar social status to MIA members and even officials, is borne out by a close examination of the list of the poor. About one quarter per cent of the individuals named in the list were described as living in someone else's house. If the confraternity

¹⁵ The bequest totaled 28 *lire*, 18 *soldi* and 4 *denari*. There is a record of a donation by Bonaventure of this amount to the MIA in 1282 and another record of the MIA purchasing five pieces of *panni bergamaschi* with the money. BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 40v and 43r. The amount of cloth distributed seems to have totaled six *brachis* for each person living in the city, and between one and eight *brachis* for those living in areas outside Bergamo.

¹⁶ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 45r.

¹⁷ Magister Albertus de Garganis was one of the two MIA members seeking paupers in the *vicinia* of S. Salvatore, and in the list of paupers a woman called Benvenuta appears, *que stat in domo domini magistro Alberti*. Guadaneus de Manero was responsible for identifying paupers in the *vicinia* of S. Leonardo, and in the list of people for that *vicinia* is one Pundinus *qui moratur in domo Guadanei*, BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 47r.

¹⁸ Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 272.

identified those who lived in others' houses, it seems reasonable to assume that the remaining individuals on the list had their own dwelling-places which they either rented or owned. Therefore, this remaining group, almost three quarters of the individuals on the list, were probably householders. It is likely, then, that only a minority of those whom the MIA aided on this early visit were entirely propertyless. An investigation of their names further suggests that some individuals receiving assistance from the confraternity enjoyed relatively high status, seen by the fact that one third of the recipients identified themselves with first names and a patronymic or a toponymic, usually the name of a nearby town.

However, while those receiving assistance from the MIA may not have been penniless, they were certainly in need. Groups frequently considered vulnerable, including the physically disabled, women, and children, all accepted cloth from the confraternity. Three people on the list were blind, two or three were "mad" or "simple" (*stultus*), one was deaf and two were known as mutes.¹⁹ In addition, slightly more than one half of the recipients of this donation were women.²⁰ The vulnerability of women in this community is illustrated by the number of women on the list who did not live in their own dwelling; nearly two thirds of those in the list who dwelt at the house of someone else were women. Women and children were sometimes singled out for assistance even when the male head of their household was still alive. For instance, the brothers searching out paupers in the *vicinia* of Borgo Canale noted that "the wife or one of the children of Brachete" should receive alms.²¹ Another woman, the wife of Henricus, a servant, was similarly provided with a donation.²² Fourteen per cent of the recipients of alms in Bergamo itself were children, most often identified as *pueri*.²³

¹⁹ They were: Muttus *qui stat in domo Venture de Lemen*; Surda de Mediolano; Ottabella *que dicitur Cappa, que non videt; et puer Gathaldi qui non videt*; Gisla Fachi de Trescure, *que non videt*; Mutta de Muzzo; Petrus *Stultus de Clixione*; possibly also Iohannes *qui dicitur Asinus*; and Stultus de Vertoa. BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 45v–48v.

²⁰ 106 women received aid while 101 men were recipients.

²¹ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 47v.

²² BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 45r.

²³ A number of children were identified as living in someone else's house; normally these were not named specifically. They were identified as: *puer qui stat in domo de Lombardis*; *quidam puer quem tenet Guglielmo Archatiri*; *puer, filius quondam Ponzi*; *puer incarzelatus qui stat in curia de Locate*; *puella de Albino que stat in domo de Ulivenis*—perhaps the house of Iohannes de Ulivenis, later minister of the MIA; *quidam puer que moratur in domo Viniani Beccari*; *unius ex pueris Otteboni Riniati qui stat prope ecclesiam de Lacaritate*. BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 45r–47v.

Outside the city the identities of those receiving assistance from the MIA were different from that inside the walls of Bergamo. For example, unlike the city, where no religious received alms, 14 per cent of the rural poor on this list were called *Frater* or *Remittus*, terms used to refer to the individuals' status as members of religious orders or as anchorites. These donations help us to construct what Robert Brentano has called "a devotional map" of the city and the countryside around it. This suggests that the conventual life of religious within the city walls was complemented by a higher incidence of eremitical life in rural areas.²⁴

The imbalance between male and female recipients of alms in the *contado* was also different than it was in the city. In the rural areas nearly two thirds of the group receiving alms was composed of men and slightly more than one third were women. Finally, children composed only 5 per cent of the group receiving alms outside the city. These differences in the identity of the MIA's clients in the city and those in the areas outside Bergamo perhaps stemmed from pragmatic reasons. MIA officials could easily move around the city's *vicinie* in search of needy individuals, but outside the city communities were more difficult to reach, and those most easily located might be the religious, most of whom were adult males.

Although MIA officials shared the thirteenth-century view of the pauper as deserving of assistance and many officials likely knew the paupers they aided, the confraternity did not welcome paupers as members on an equal footing with other men or women. Poor men, in particular, were unlikely to join the company, since its entrance requirements for men, especially the novitiate, were socially and financially burdensome. These requirements created a barrier for poor men, ensuring that men of middling to upper social rank were most welcome as members of the MIA.²⁵ But despite the confraternity's definition of them as passive, paupers did sometimes become members of the company. Furthermore, in general, during the thirteenth century paupers in Bergamo did not see themselves simply as objects of the MIA's almsgiving. Instead, they treated the company

²⁴ Brentano, "Considerazioni di un Lettore di Testamenti," in *Nolens Intestatus Decedere: Il Testamento Come Fonte della Storia Religiosa e Sociale* (Regione dell'Umbria: Editrice Umbra Cooperativa, 1985) 7.

²⁵ The exact amount of dues payments and other donations to the company was left up to the discretion of the individual member. See chapter 2 of the 1265 rule for more. Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 113.

as both a charitable provider and as an object of their own donations. By taking an active role in donating charity to the MIA and by joining the company during the thirteenth century, poor men and women demonstrated that their self-concept was not formed solely by the confraternity's expectations of them.

To understand the complex relationship between the MIA's expectations of the poor and paupers' own sense of their connection with the confraternity in the thirteenth century, we can look at groups of poor workers such as wine carriers, or *brentatori*, and domestic servants. Members of both groups were active participants in the confraternity as well as recipients of its alms. The *brentatori*'s work involved carrying large volumes of wine in *brenta*, wooden containers with a capacity of about 70 liters, on their backs through the city and outlying areas.²⁶ They were immortalized by the Franciscan chronicler Salimbene, who described the popular (and, in his view, false) saint Albert of Cremona, a wine carrier, as a "wine carrier, a wine drinker, and a sinner" (*portator, potator, peccator*).²⁷ Salimbene's description of the *brentatori* of Parma as unsavory characters who divided up the donations of the faithful given to them in Albert's name was likely a reflection of their already-marginal status in the cities of northern Italy.

Both *brentatori* and servants were identified as paupers. The poverty of the *brentatori* was attested by the fact that their wages were low, amounting to a few *denari* per day, although their work was physically punishing.²⁸ In Bergamo, *brentatori* occasionally collected alms, and the MIA organized paupers' funerals for them. Thus, in 1282, Anselmus, a *brentator*, appeared on the list of paupers who received cloth from the MIA and in 1297, the MIA organized a pauper's funeral for a *brentator*, paying 6 *denari* for his burial expenses.²⁹ Testators sometimes left small bequests to the children of *brentatori*, further

²⁶ I am most grateful to Lester Little for first identifying the *brentatori* as a marginal group, and then generously discussing his own research into them over the course of many years. He is currently working on a full-length study of *brentatori* on the Italian peninsula.

²⁷ *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, ed. Joseph Baird (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1986) 512.

²⁸ In 1325, for instance, the cellarer of the MIA paid two *brentatori* 5 *denari* each to carry wine from a neighborhood outside the city walls to the MIA's house in the centre of the city, a walk of more than half an hour over rough, hilly terrain. BCBg, Specola Doc 403 (unfoliated).

²⁹ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 46v and BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 293v.

underscoring the general perception of them as a poor group.³⁰ Like the *brentatori*, domestic servants also earned little from their labor, and they sometimes turned to the MIA for alms. For instance, from time to time the MIA provided female servants with small amounts of cash to be used as dowries. MIA officials also recorded other alms donations to servants, such as provisions of grain and payments for their burials.³¹

But even as they occasionally received alms or work from the MIA, these poor workers demonstrated their desire to participate in the confraternity on an equal footing with other citizens of Bergamo. A few paupers did become members of the company. Admittedly, these amounted to a tiny percentage of the overall membership of the company. Of the more than one thousand women who joined the MIA between 1265 and 1296, three have also been identified as confraternal alms recipients.³² Included in the company's membership lists were both *brentatori* and servants. One *brentator*, Ser Petrus de Cantono, was a member of the MIA in the 1290s.³³ Two female members of the MIA listed their husband's occupation as *brentator*, while another woman was the daughter of a *brentator*.³⁴ Only one woman on the company's matriculation list called herself a servant. However, twenty-two other women on the list were recorded as living in the house of another individual. At least some of these women were probably servants, and most were probably poor.³⁵ Other confraternities in Bergamo also counted the working poor among their members. Bergamo's confraternity for the support of prisoners, formed in 1325, included both *brentatori* and their widows.³⁶ Even if they did not become confraternity members, poor workers sometimes gave

³⁰ Such as the 10 *soldi* left for the daughter of "Cuchi," a *brentator*, by a widow in her 1349 testament. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1346-48) 147-48.

³¹ For the records of alms donations to servants, see BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, registers 1361 and 1362.

³² The women, Poma de Zonio, Cossina, the daughter of Lanfranco Adobati, and Gisla de Alzano, were identified as both paupers and MIA members by Maria Teresa Brolis in *La Matricola Femminile della Misericordia di Bergamo*, LXII.

³³ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 234r.

³⁴ The two women married to *brentatori* were Gisla, wife of Zambonus and Ymelda, wife of Fugazze. ?Saxonbere was the daughter of Pozzus, another *brentator*. BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 2r and 22v.

³⁵ For the names, see BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 1v, 4v, 5r, 6v, 7r, 9r, 10v, 11r/v, 12r, 13r, 14r, 15v, 16r, 18v, 23r/v.

³⁶ BCBg, AB 72, 9r/v.

donations or left bequests to the MIA. For example, the records of donations to the MIA after late thirteenth-century civic strife had destroyed the company's grain stores include gifts from *brentatori*.³⁷ Similarly, in 1272, Petrallus de Alme, a servant, donated three *somma* of millet to the MIA for the benefit of his soul.³⁸ In 1274, the heirs of Michael, a poor candle-seller, made a bequest of 10 *soldi* in his name to the confraternity.³⁹

As poor workers sometimes joined the MIA and gave it alms in the thirteenth century, women, including poor women, played a significant role in its almsgiving activities.⁴⁰ Donation records of the confraternity between 1267 and 1280 reveal that in those years, women's donations comprised between one quarter and almost one half of the small number of total receipts for one year. In 1276, for instance, women gave 13 of the 34 donations the confraternity received. The MIA's cellarer carefully recorded the names of these early female donors. For example, in 1272, the cellarer noted that a bread-seller called dona Gisla had left 33 *denari* to the MIA.⁴¹ Although Gisla was identified with the honorific "dona," her work and the fact that she did not have a surname suggests that she was a relatively low-status inhabitant of the city. Similarly, the cellarer recorded that Ymia, a poor woman living with the Paparini family clan in the *vicinia* of S. Leonardo, promised 2 *soldi* to the confraternity in 1273.⁴² By recording these women's names alongside those of higher-status male donors, the MIA provided an opportunity for low-status groups to create a role for themselves within the company.

But these opportunities which had existed for the poor within the MIA in the thirteenth century waned in subsequent decades. As the confraternity became more closely linked to civic politics and power structures, it ceased to provide a role for lower-status people within it. Instead, by the later fourteenth century, the MIA worked to impose its authority over its clientele more completely than it had in the

³⁷ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 268r.

³⁸ BCBg, MIA archivio 724, 6v.

³⁹ BCBg, MIA archivio 724, 9r.

⁴⁰ Since they did not serve as confraternity officials, women did not distribute alms to the poor, although they could do so on behalf of private individuals. See the request by a female testator for her female friend to distribute alms to the poor on her behalf in BCBg, MIA perg. 1175.

⁴¹ BCBg, MIA archivio 724, 6r.

⁴² BCBg, MIA archivio 724, 7v.

past. By mid-century, the increasing bureaucratization of the MIA's almsgiving program had cemented incipient hierarchies in the company. In that period, the MIA, like many other charitable confraternities throughout Europe, reorganized its approach to assistance. It began to keep more comprehensive records of alms recipients and often required the poor to come to the confraternity's house in order to receive alms.⁴³ Individual paupers who came to the confraternity's house to claim assistance were required to present a ticket or token in exchange for grain, wine, or cash. The use of these tokens was widespread during the later Middle Ages. Domenico Lenzi's description of the poor and needy begging for grain in 1329 Florence noted that each person eligible for alms received a ticket from the confraternity which could be redeemed for grain.⁴⁴

The new system of alms distribution did provide some benefits to the poor. Most notably, it allowed them to receive alms more frequently than the former monthly almsgiving *andata*. In 1363, the poor holding tokens could ask for charity three days a week, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.⁴⁵ However, this new form of almsgiving also gave the leadership of the company tighter control over the almsgiving process. In the 1380s, the MIA stated that wine would only be available on Mondays, and stressed that only those holding tokens could receive it.⁴⁶

Furthermore, the new organization of almsgiving probably also impressed the needy with the confraternity's status as a powerful institution. By distributing alms from their house, rather than travelling throughout the community to provide the needy with assistance, MIA officials confronted their poor clients directly with the institution's wealth and civic importance. In the fourteenth century, the MIA's quarters were large and impressive. During the first half of the century, the confraternity spent almost 600 *lire*—the cost of building the entire hospital of S. Vincenzo—buying and refurbishing the property, and erecting additional buildings on it.⁴⁷ A later description of

⁴³ Although the confraternity also undertook some almsgiving visits, these were less regular than previously. See records in MIA archivio 1383 bis.

⁴⁴ Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 275.

⁴⁵ BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 9v. The MIA's archive contains (undated) wooden forms which were used to print such tickets. See BCBg, MIA archivio 933.

⁴⁶ BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 28v.

⁴⁷ In 1300, the MIA bought the property for 362 *lire*. BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 336v. In 1353, the confraternity recorded costs of more than 200 *lire* for renovations to the same property. BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, register 1352 (unfoliated).

these buildings from 1431 noted that they included a main house, decorated with frescoes, customarily used for meetings. Another building was used to house the organization's written records and there was also a separate wine cellar, which could hold between 30 and 60 large wine barrels at a time.⁴⁸ Thus, the space the MIA occupied in the fourteenth century emphasized the confraternity's connection with power and authority in the city, including literate culture, symbolized by its construction of an archive for its documents, and wealth, exemplified by its large stores of wine and other alms.⁴⁹ By substituting its formerly neighborhood-based almsgiving routine with one that employed the confraternity's headquarters as a site for the distribution of alms, MIA officials replaced the confraternity's presentation of itself in shared community with the poor with an image of an awe-inspiring institution set above its clients.

As the confraternity began to build a more prominent civic profile, it paid less attention to those lower-status people who had previously participated as donors to its charitable program. Thus, women's participation in the MIA's almsgiving declined. By the end of the thirteenth century, when the MIA's charitable program was supported by twice-yearly grants of 50 *lire* from communal officials and many donations from local male luminaries, the proportion of women's donations to the company dropped off from their previously high levels. For example, on average after 1280, women made less than 10 per cent of the total donations to the MIA, although the actual number of female donors increased from just a few in the 1260s, to highs of more than 75 women annually by the 1290s. The total number of donors to the confraternity also grew substantially during this period.⁵⁰ However, as time passed and the confraternity's public status increased, it depended less on donations from female members than on donations from influential male donors. Donations of clothing and other household objects, which had traditionally been

⁴⁸ Cited in Locatelli, "La Casa della Misericordia in Bergamo," *Bergomum* 5 (1931) 143.

⁴⁹ The MIA was not the only confraternity in the city with its own house in the fourteenth century. The *Carcerati*, too, owned a house (*domus*) (in the *vicinia* of S. Michele de Archu) in which officials held meetings. ASBg, Notarile, G. Mozzi, busta 84b (1385) 436.

⁵⁰ For donations from the 1280s and 1290s, see entries in both BCBg, MIA archivio 718 and 724.

directed to the company by female testators, also ceased to appear in the company's records.

Growing donations to the MIA from powerful individuals and groups also likely resulted in less interest within the institution in attracting donations from women. Comparing the donations of men and women after 1280, when the confraternity began to receive more than one hundred donations in an average year, we find that the cellarer stopped recording the identity of all female donors. Each set of the MIA's donation records after 1280 contained several entries noting small donations from "a good woman" or "a certain woman."⁵¹ By contrast, the names of male donors were almost always recorded in the lists. Other confraternities appear to have adopted the same recording pattern as the MIA. The parish confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna kept records of donations between 1302 and 1340. Of the hundreds of donations which the notary of S. Alessandro recorded in this period, only 23 were from women, and of those, only nine women's names were recorded. All of the other donors were identified only as a wife or mother of a particular man.⁵² The symbolism in this change is apparent. By ceasing to record the names of female donors in the fourteenth century, confraternities emphasized both their focus on powerful, male citizens and underscored their lack of interest in women's smaller charitable donations. Male donors, unlike female members, could confer not only alms but also higher social status on confraternities.

New forms of assistance which the MIA provided to the poor further emphasized the social and economic distinction between donors and recipients in the company. These new forms of assistance also revealed a movement within the confraternity to define women as alms recipients, rather than donors. In the 1360s, for instance, the confraternity began to make monthly provisions of dowries to needy girls. Several hundred girls—mainly servants and daughters of workers in the city—received dowries annually from the MIA's cellarer.⁵³ Since the provision of these dowries was not done at the expense of other assistance the MIA was thus benefitting more people than

⁵¹ Such as the donations given by "six women from Zogno" in BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 82v and 84r.

⁵² For the nine women's names, see BCBg, AB 394, 5r, 7v, 11v, 17r, 28v, 55r, 28r, 45v, 47v.

⁵³ For the complete record of these donations, see BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 94r.

it had in the past. This assistance also served as a form of social control, as the company used its wealth to shape the domestic arrangements of many poor inhabitants of the city and to define their social rank for others in the community.⁵⁴ Anna Esposito has shown that early modern Roman confraternities, which began distributing dowries to poor, “honest” girls in the late fifteenth century, also attempted to control the social behavior of recipients. Esposito describes the way Roman confraternities organized elaborate public ceremonies which imitated many of the rituals of marriage, with processions of the dowered girls led by older women from the confraternity. She identifies such ceremonies as “an admonition and a message for all the women of Rome.”⁵⁵ Like the Roman confraternities, through its provision of dowries to poor girls the MIA articulated a new kind of relationship with its clients, using assistance to locate recipients within a specific social network. This change revealed the MIA’s desire to ensure that the categories of donor and recipient were more fixed and less fluid than previously.

Aside from its attempt to use its assistance as a method of social control, the MIA also began to provide more specialized forms of aid to the needy. As such, the confraternity started to use alms to cater to the needs of individuals who had experienced particular misfortunes, providing the poor with services such as nursing and medical care. This change reflected, perhaps, a belief that the donor of aid—the confraternity—was better-equipped than the poor recipient to decide how its charity should be used. At the same time, while

⁵⁴ This view of the meaning of the dowry is in keeping with the views of Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, who has argued that the dowry “penetrated to the very heart of the social ideology of the time” since it “conferred and proclaimed before all the social rank of the marrying couple and their families.” Klapisch-Zuber, “The Griselda Complex” in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, 214. In contrast, see the argument by Stanley Chojnacki, who suggests that dowries could give women power within their families. Chojnacki, “Gender and the Early Renaissance State,” in Brown and Davis, eds., *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy*, 75–76. Chojnacki does not address the fact that dowries were given with important strings attached; women only received dowry property on their marriage, and their control of that property diminished during their marriage. As well, most male testators ensured that their widows would not request the return of their dowries by stating that the return of the dowry meant that their widow could not longer live in the family house or enjoy any of the family property.

⁵⁵ Esposito, “Ad dotandum puellas virgines, pauperes, et honestas: Social Needs and Confraternal Charity in Rome in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,” *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* XVIII(2) (1994) 12.

the confraternity's charitable strategy evinced a new set of beliefs about the regulation of assistance, important aspects of the MIA's almsgiving remained rooted in conventional piety. For instance, the confraternity continued to offer the majority of its assistance to groups such as widows, children and prisoners, as it had done since the earliest days of its existence.

Initiating medical care for the poor was one of the most significant developments to the confraternity's charity. In the fourteenth century, the MIA began to provide its clients with treatment for ailments and injuries. In 1325 Peterbonus de Leverne, received 5 *soldi* from the confraternity after he had been "wounded in many parts of his body."⁵⁶ Bisescus de Curno received 4 *soldi* from the confraternity in 1362, and he promised to give it to a man in the village of Curno "whose head was broken."⁵⁷ Another man, "wounded in one shoulder" in 1363 also received alms.⁵⁸ Pregnant women were another group which the MIA began to assist. Grain or cash were customary donations for those in labor or with newly-delivered children.⁵⁹

The confraternity sometimes paid professional physicians to provide medical care to the needy. In 1361, Magister Donatus de Lemen received 4 *lire* and 16 *soldi* from the MIA for the medicine and care he had given a poor orphan. The boy was described as a pauper whose guardian had been sent to jail after he had "treated the said minor badly." The MIA's interest in the boy apparently stemmed from his father's will, in which Betonius de Urio had named the confraternity his heir in the event of his son's early death.⁶⁰ In several other instances sick or injured individuals received medical aid from the confraternity. Dominus Iacobus de Coazzis was offered the large sum of 10 florins for having given medical care to another boy.⁶¹ Donatus de Lemen, the physician mentioned above, worked for the confraternity in assisting the poor in other instances, as well. In 1363, he performed surgery on a boy for an illness described as *malum lapidis* (gall or kidney stones?), and the confraternity helped the mother pay for the expenses of the treatment.⁶²

⁵⁶ BCBg, Specola Doc 403.

⁵⁷ BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg 1362.

⁵⁸ BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 5v.

⁵⁹ For examples of such donations from the 1320s and 1360s, see BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1326 (unfoliated) and BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 5v.

⁶⁰ BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1362.

⁶¹ BCBg, AB 229, 124v.

⁶² BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 4v.

Another type of medical care which the MIA offered in the fourteenth century was nursing assistance for dying individuals, both wealthy and poor. At this time, the MIA began to pay nurses to care for the dying in their homes. In 1303 a poor woman received 5 *soldi* from the MIA for the care of Michele de Desenzano, which she undertook “for many days” while he was dying.⁶³ Two brothers, Ambrosius and Petrus de Cenate, also cared for Michele “night and day” during his illness, and organized his burial services, for which they were paid 26 *soldi* and 9 *denari*.⁶⁴ The brothers also nursed several other individuals around the same time. Their duties involved guarding the possessions of the sick and providing nursing care for long periods.⁶⁵

The MIA also supplied wetnurses for orphaned or needy infants, paying the women in cash and food. In 1362, for instance, the cellarer paid a woman called Marchina, an inhabitant of Casteneta, 1 *lira* for acting as a wetnurse to the son of a woman from Mariano.⁶⁶ Another woman, Bruna de Urìo, received four bushels of grain and 1 *lira* for nursing the son of Betonius de Urìo, the aforementioned boy to whom the confraternity had also provided medical care.⁶⁷ A woman known only as “the daughter of Faciolus”—the sketchiness of this name suggests she was a pauper herself—received 1 *lira* and 5 *soldi* for nursing the five-day-old son of Pedrettus de Stabullo in 1362.⁶⁸ Some of these women worked for the confraternity for long periods. One unidentified woman nursed the infant son of the pauper Mininus de Gromfalegio for two months in 1362. She may have been Bona, wife of Paolus de Azzano, who was listed by the MIA as nursing the same child for a month the next year.⁶⁹

⁶³ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 379r.

⁶⁴ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 378r.

⁶⁵ See, for instance, payments to them for care of one magister Petrus, BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 337v, and Gandinus de Gandino, a wealthy citizen of Bergamo who had named the confraternity his heir. The canevarius gave Ambroxius 3 *soldi* and 4 *denari* for spending five nights and one day caring for Gandinus, and an additional 20 *soldi* for 20 days of care he had provided the sick man. Peterzinus received 22 *soldi* for the 25 days he cared for Gandinus at the same time BCBg, MIA archivio 799, 2r.

⁶⁶ BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1362.

⁶⁷ BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1362.

⁶⁸ BCBg, MIA 1383 bis, reg. 1362.

⁶⁹ BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1362. The woman received 2 *lire* for her work.

Other women became the guardians of children left in the MIA's care. For ten years between the 1350s and 1360s, the MIA paid a widow, Ricadona de Barzizza, to care for Richadivina, identified as the daughter of Pre Algisius, archpriest of the *pieve* of S. Giovanni de Telgate, who had made the confraternity his universal heir in his testament.⁷⁰ The payments included a yearly *soma* of grain and cash totalling several *lire* or even gold florins.⁷¹ Similarly, the MIA took care of Samuele, the son of Petrus de la Fornace, parish priest of the church of S. Michele de Archu. In the payments that the cellarer made to Samuele's guardian, the priest of the church of S. Michele al Pozzo Bianco, he stated that the priest had made an arrangement for the boy's care with the confraternity. In 1355, for instance, the boy's guardian received five bushels of millet from the MIA. The cellarer stated that the grain was grown on land which had been held by Petrus, and that in his will the priest had asked the MIA to use the proceeds from the land to help maintain his son.⁷² This was honored in 1356 when the cellarer invested 28 *lire* of the confraternity's money "for the use of Samuele" as stated in the agreement between Petrus and the MIA.⁷³

These arrangements made by the MIA for the care of children are further evidence of a shift in its charitable policy over the course of the fourteenth century. In earlier years the confraternity had refused to act as guardian to orphaned children, because its officials were not able to provide such long-term care. For instance, in 1326, when a testator requested that the MIA officials act as guardians of his heirs, who were legal minors, the MIA asked the *podestà* of Bergamo to be relieved of the responsibility. The confraternity stated that since its officials changed every year it could not promise to maintain the children, and neither would it be able to continue to provide care for all the poor of the city if they were to take on the

⁷⁰ For the will, see BCBg, MIA perg. 750.

⁷¹ In 1353 she received a total of 6 *lire* and 14 *soldi* and another payment of 10 *soldi* made to her son Zambininus, who went before the MIA in his mother's place in November. BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1352. In 1354 the payments were the same as the previous year, but she also received 2 gold florins. In 1360 she was paid 6 *lire* and 19 *soldi* to provide food for the girl. BCBg, AB 229, 105r. In 1363 she received another 6 *lire* and 19 *soldi*, and the MIA also gave her a *soma* of grain. BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1362.

⁷² BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1354.

⁷³ BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis reg. 1354. For the will, see BCBg, MIA perg. 599.

guardianship.⁷⁴ By mid-century, however, the confraternity's willingness to help orphaned children had altered. In part this was in response to changes within its bureaucratic structure, and it also reflected the developing paternalism of the company. In addition to the previous examples, the MIA's records state that during the 1360s the confraternity agreed to give one of its officials, Iohannes, known as Faba, 10 *lire* a year to feed and educate Gencina, daughter of the late Armaninus de Bottanuco. Furthermore, the confraternity itself promised to provide clothing and shoes for the girl.⁷⁵ In 1370, a testator again asked that the confraternity officials serve as the guardian or *curator generale* of his children, and this time we have no reason to believe that the confraternity refused the request.⁷⁶ The gradual specialization of the confraternity's charitable activities and the development of a small group of 'career' officials, who were present from one year to the next and therefore able to provide continuing care for these children, probably made the later requests more palatable to the confraternity.

The MIA also provided compensation for individuals whose property had been destroyed by violence or natural causes. During the fourteenth century ordinary citizens feared the violence of outlaws living in the *contado* around Bergamo.⁷⁷ In the later part of the century the confraternity provided assistance to those whose property had been destroyed during assaults. In 1356 the MIA lent more than 16 *lire* to Martinus, called Bornia, and Iohannes, called Mazucho, brothers from Spirano whose property had been stolen by Tomaso de Grecis "and other evildoers living in Alzano Sopra."⁷⁸ In 1362 the cellarer gave 2 *lire* to a man called Cresole, an inhabitant of the Valle Astino, whose house had been destroyed by fire.⁷⁹ In 1363,

⁷⁴ BCBg, MIA perg. 574.

⁷⁵ BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 6r.

⁷⁶ For the request, see BCBg, MIA perg. 1197. The testator promised that the MIA would inherit his property if the children died with no male heirs.

⁷⁷ An example of such violence occurred during the night of August 9, 1329, when a gang of more than ten men set a trap in a field near the *vicinia* of S. Giovanni dell'Ospedale. They were waiting for victims to rob, anyone who might wander into the field, and they found their targets in some members of the *podestà's* entourage, who were looking for the night watch. The thieves attacked the men, stole their belongings and "wounded them, so that they lost a great deal of blood." Four of the men died as they and their companions cried out to those living nearby to save them. BCBg, MIA perg. 11846.

⁷⁸ BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg 1362.

⁷⁹ BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg 1362.

MIA officials decided to give 9 *lire* rather than the usual 6 on a charitable visit to those people who had been affected by “robbery, homicide and fires” which, officials reported, “have occurred daily in the region of Bergamo, committed by evil people (*gentes iniquas*).”⁸⁰ Kidnapping was also a threat to the citizens of Bergamo during this period. In 1302 Anexia, widow of the wealthy citizen Gandinus de Gandino, was kidnapped “by force” (*per vim raptā*) from her house one night by Albertus de Cazatico and his son, who took her to Cazatico. Confraternity officials sent three of Gandinus’ men to the house to bring her back to Bergamo.⁸¹

The way in which the confraternity offered charity to prisoners also changed between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁸² Prisoners were usually the poorest of all lawbreakers. Imprisonment was a more expensive way to handle convicted criminals than methods such as banishment or fines, and thus prisoners were likely those who could not afford to pay the fines assessed them by a court.⁸³ The poverty of prisoners had always been one of the confraternity’s concerns. Since prisoners had to supply their own food and other necessities, but were usually too poor to do so, in the thirteenth century the confraternity had provided prisoners with basic comforts. In 1292, for example, the MIA spent more than 14 *soldi* on straw for the cells of prisoners in the communal jail.⁸⁴ Records of charitable visits from the period also report that the MIA officials gave alms to prisoners.⁸⁵ By 1357, the confraternity described this aid as including “food, salt, wine, clothes and even money.”⁸⁶

⁸⁰ BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 5r.

⁸¹ In his records of the MIA’s payment of Gandinus’ debts, the *canevari* noted that he had paid the three men 26 *soldi* and 8 *denari* for their work. BCBg, MIA archivio 799, 4v.

⁸² For background to this issue in the early modern period, see Nicholas Terpstra’s work on confraternities and prisoners in Bologna entitled “Confraternal Prison Charity and Political Consolidation in Sixteenth-Century Bologna,” *Journal of Modern History* 66 (1994) 217–248.

⁸³ Daniel Waley, *Siena and the Sienese in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 69.

⁸⁴ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 201v.

⁸⁵ The *andata* records for the 1280s and 90s in BCBg, MIA archivio 718 mention that *prisoneriis* receive part of the alms given by the *canevari*, but never specify how much.

⁸⁶ The MIA to Bernabò Visconti, 1357. BCBg, MIA archivio 912 (single parchment, unfoliated). In 1363 MIA officials discussed giving 18 loaves of bread and some wine to some men from nearby Alzano Lombardo who were being held in the city’s jail. BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 7r.

In the 1360s, the MIA awarded further assistance to individual prisoners, paying debts to release people from jail or ransoming them from their captors. The payment of prisoners' debts in order to allow them to leave jail became a common issue discussed at meetings of confraternity officials in the 1360s. Martinus de Loteris, for instance, was jailed in 1363 for debts totaling five gold florins. His provost, Merinus, approached the officials of the MIA and asked that they lend him money to release Martinus from jail and make restitution for usurious transactions he had performed. The MIA released several other debtors from jail in Bergamo and outside in the same year.⁸⁷ Franzisclus, the heir of Brunazzius de S. Gallo, was being held in the communal jail at Parma when Brunazzius himself went before the MIA and "begged for mercy" from the confraternity officials, asking them to help Franzisclus by paying the two florins which would release him from jail.⁸⁸ Nicholas Terpstra notes that in sixteenth-century Bologna it became common for testators to leave legacies for the relief of jailed debtors.⁸⁹ In the wills of Bergamasque testators for the fourteenth century however I have not identified one instance of a legacy aimed specifically at prisoners. The change in the confraternity's behavior to prisoners in this period seems to have been its own initiative, not motivated by bequests geared to this purpose.

The confraternity also became involved in the ransom of soldiers captured in battles outside Bergamo. Records of the confraternity's expenses from 1363 reveal that the MIA helped pay the ransoms of several soldiers captured by Can Grande della Scala, the ruler of Verona. Prisoners were normally released on payment of a ransom which ranged from 1 *soldo* to more than 1 *lira* per person. Various individuals collected the money from the confraternity, including, in at least two cases, the wives of the captured men, who must then have gone to have their husbands freed.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ For these transactions, see BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 3r/v.

⁸⁸ BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 8r.

⁸⁹ Terpstra, "Confraternal Prison Charity," 223–224.

⁹⁰ In two other cases the ransoms were paid directly to the captured men, although the record does not explain how they were able to collect. Ambroxius, son of the late Guarisclus de Prezate, was given 1 *lira* by the MIA to gain his release from captivity. In a similar instance, Cressinus, son of the late Petrus de Terramontis de Pallazo, was captured by the Veronese in Galemano, near Brescia. The MIA paid the one gold florin for his freedom. More often, intermediaries approached the confraternity and asked for the money to liberate captives. In one case Bonus de Urniano was given money to release five of his co-citizens. See BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg 1362 and BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 3r.

During the fourteenth century, the MIA's work with prisoners in Bergamo also extended to providing an individual to accompany condemned men to the place of their execution. This man probably led the prisoners in a procession to their execution, and apparently he carried a cross and wore a cloak or robe, perhaps meant to cover his face. In 1358, a man called Fino, who also helped bury prisoners, was given a hooded garment, or *capam* to wear while he walked before prisoners bound for execution.⁹¹ In 1362, the cellarer paid Iohannes de Mersis 2 *soldi* for his work carrying a cross "before those who were beheaded on the kalends of August."⁹² The burial of prisoners, too, became a larger aspect of the MIA's pious work in the later fourteenth century. From the 1340s, records describe the bodies of prisoners that were consigned to confraternal officials, who then arranged for their burial, normally spending 5 or 6 *soldi* to do so. Several times officials received bodies of men who had died in jail.⁹³ A few MIA officials took on the responsibility for collecting their bodies and burying them.⁹⁴ Sometimes the individuals who buried the executed prisoners were themselves poor and, like the man called Fino who performed this task regularly for the MIA, were probably in need of the money the confraternity was willing to pay.⁹⁵

The specialized assistance the MIA provided to the poor in the second half of the fourteenth century demonstrated important continuities with its early charitable program in that this assistance was still directed at the same category of paupers as it had been before. At the same time, the changes to the forms of aid the confraternity provided marked an important shift in its identity as an institution and a civic power. By creating specific categories of relief, the MIA's officials linked the confraternity to the newly-developing culture of professionalization evident in the fourteenth century. This type of

⁹¹ BCBg, AB 229, 69r.

⁹² BCBg MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1362.

⁹³ One example is an act of Gerardus Soyarius dated 1347 in which Albertus de Payarolis received the body of Iohannes de Azano, who had died while being held in jail. Albertus was charged with burying the body "at the church of S. Lorenzo or wherever else pleased him." ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1347-48) 132. For another similar record, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1347-48) 168.

⁹⁴ For instance, one 1362 record of expenses noted 5 *soldi* given to Baronus de Zonio which Baronus spent in burying Antonius de Verdello *cui amputatum fuit caput de mense januarii* BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, reg. 1362.

⁹⁵ In 1361 Fino, along with two others, buried an executed man. BCBg, AB 229, 123r.

help also gave the confraternity a stronger hold over its clients, as it determined specifically how its assistance was to be used by recipients. As it reshaped itself as an institution, the MIA also reshaped its relationship with its clients.

The changes to the support the MIA provided the poor not only demonstrate the new dynamic that existed between them and the poor, they also suggest that the MIA was helping more people than it had in the past. This increase in assistance is evinced by the larger number of tokens handed out to the poor in the late fourteenth century. In the 1380s, the MIA provided more than one thousand tokens per week to the poor.⁹⁶ Comparing this number to estimates of population figures in Bergamo suggests that in theory the MIA provided succor to about 20 per cent of the city's inhabitants at this time.⁹⁷ Records from the early 1360s show that the confraternity had the money to help these people; it collected an average of 223 *lire* monthly or more than 2600 *lire* annually in rents, bequests, and donations.⁹⁸ The confraternity's expansion of its charitable program mirrored developments taking place in the nearest large centre, Milan, where by the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century there was a notable expansion of almsgiving bodies governed by lay people.⁹⁹

Through both its building program and the expansion and rationalization of its charitable donations, the MIA situated itself among the dominant civic institutions in fourteenth-century Bergamo. At the same time, the company also articulated a more rigid definition of its clientele's status within the organization, and in doing so discouraged the fluid interaction between donors and recipients of charity that had been characteristic of the thirteenth century. The growing controls that the MIA placed on the poor in these years correspond to R.I. Moore's theory that emerging authorities in the Middle Ages sought to "assert and extend" their power over the individuals and

⁹⁶ BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 28v.

⁹⁷ Estimates of the city's population place it at about 10,000 people in the mid-fifteenth century. Maria Ginatempo and Lucia Sandri, *L'Italia delle città: il popolamento urbano tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (sec. XIII–XV) (Firenze, 1990) 76, cited in François Menant, "L'identità civica," in *La Storia di Bergamo: il Comune e la Signoria* (Bergamo, Fondazione per la Storia Economica e Sociale di Bergamo, 1999) 40.

⁹⁸ For these figures see BCBg, MIA archivio 1383 bis, register 1362.

⁹⁹ Albini, "Continuità e Innovazioni: la Carità a Milano nel Quattrocento," in Albini, *Carità e Governo delle Povertà (secoli XII–XV)*, 70.

groups around them.¹⁰⁰ But while Moore implicitly accepts that individuals were incapable of resisting the encroaching power of medieval authorities, I have found that the relationship between the MIA and the poor in Bergamo was more complicated than this theory allows. In fact, some paupers in Bergamo challenged the MIA's redefinition of its almsgiving program since this change denied them the very assistance they felt they deserved.

By the mid-fourteenth century the MIA's officials placed increasing emphasis on the need to control the way the poor approached the company. The poor responded to this change in several ways. In some cases, those who considered themselves candidates for aid from the MIA made direct requests for alms from the confraternity. These requests sometimes turned into battles between the confraternity and alms seekers in which the confraternity accused petitioners of lying in order to profit from the company. Examining the combative relationship between the MIA and these petitioners provides valuable insights into both changes to confraternal culture as well as the agency of one group of paupers.

Those who petitioned the MIA for help in the fourteenth century were members of the shame-faced poor or *poveri vergognosi*, individuals whose financial circumstances did not match their relatively high social rank. Customarily these individuals received aid from the confraternity in secret, since they did not want to reveal their plight to their neighbors and peers. By the end of the fourteenth century, however, some of these shame-faced paupers entered into protracted disagreements with the confraternity over their appeals for assistance. Present research supports the argument that these conflicts were motivated by changes within the MIA itself. As the confraternity grew more authoritarian, it began to examine its clients' requests for assistance more carefully than it had in the past. Its refusal to provide alms to some paupers led to conflicts with the petitioners.

Petitions by *poveri vergognosi* to the MIA not only reveal the increasingly hierarchical nature of the confraternity, they also illuminate the continuing agency of this group of paupers. Petitioners consciously developed strategies to gain assistance from the confraternity, shaping their stories of poverty to persuade officials of their need. For instance, three times in 1384, three brothers, Antonius (Tonolo),

¹⁰⁰ Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 110.

Tomasus, and Iacobus Bonghi, members of a noble Bergamasque family, presented petitions to the confraternity asking officials to give them land from the estate of Petrus Bonghi, their relative, who had died in 1358.¹⁰¹ Although they had already received the rights to several pieces of land from the estate in previous years, the brothers stated that they were entitled to more property, since Petrus had left it to the MIA on the understanding that it be used to benefit his poor relations, and they claimed that they were indeed poor.¹⁰²

In their petitions for aid, the Bonghi brothers attempted to persuade the MIA of their need by emphasizing the effect of their poverty on their children. Among them, the brothers stated, they had fifteen children to raise on a collective annual income of 40 *lire*, suggesting that the future of these children was in jeopardy as a result of their poverty. In the first petition, the brothers stated that assistance from the MIA would allow them to raise their children with “dignity.”¹⁰³ In their second request, the brothers noted that they now had sixteen “small” children to raise, and they abandoned emphasis on their children’s social rank for a more desperate assertion: they claimed that on account of their poverty, they could not rear the children themselves.¹⁰⁴ The Bonghi brothers also emphasized the desires of their late relative as they sought to manipulate the MIA’s almsgiving to suit their needs. They suggested that the MIA would be doing their relative’s will by providing them with aid, stating that “dominus Petrus would do this if he were alive.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ In October and November of 1384 MIA officials examined the Bonghi’s case three times, and the brothers appeared before the officials at least once. BCBg, MIA archivio 1245, 40v–41v. Other members of the family had attempted to gain access to the estate, but had not claimed poverty. See, for instance, the request of Salvinus Bonghi in 1382, ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117a, 344–347. The family had long been prominent in Bergamo. Several members had served in the communal government of the twelfth century, and one ancestor, Roberto Bonghi, had served as bishop of Bergamo between 1289 and 1292. Caprioli, et al., *Diocesi di Bergamo*, 104–105. Also see François Menant, “Come si forma una leggenda familiare: l’esempio dei Bonghi,” *Archivio Storico Bergamasco* 2 (1982) 9–27.

¹⁰² For the MIA’s record of the dispute with the Bonghi, including the brothers’ three petitions, MIA officials’ responses to them, and the arbitrators’ decisions, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 12–27.

¹⁰³ The petition stated: *et quindecim filios quos habuit nutrire possint dignemini eisdem providere de aliquibus ex bonis dicti quondam domini Petri . . .* ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 16.

¹⁰⁴ *Et habuit filios xvi parvulos quos propter eorum paupertatem alere non possint . . .* ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Et hoc faceret suprascriptus dominus Petrus si viveret.* ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 18.

The arguments put forward by the Bonghi brothers for their right to assistance are illustrative of the tensions that existed between the confraternity and the *poveri vergognosi*. The Bonghi's aggressive approach signaled to the MIA that the brothers were attempting to undermine its authority. In response to these arguments, the confraternity reasserted its authority by enumerating its financial commitments and redefining its charitable mandate. The officials stated that they had previously given help to the family by renting several pieces of land to them at reduced rates. For instance, Antonius had rented several pieces of property outside Bergamo from the MIA for half of their regular rate.¹⁰⁶ And although the MIA had provided the brothers with these privileges, the officials complained, the brothers had not paid the rent.¹⁰⁷ The officials also argued that they were carrying out Petrus Bonghi's wishes that his estate be used primarily to provide dowries to needy girls in the Bonghi clan. Officials supplied a list of dowry recipients, and stated that more than 1300 *lire* had been spent on this cause already. Furthermore, they noted that three of the brothers' sisters and one of their daughters had received dowries.¹⁰⁸ Finally, the officials asserted that their priority was to give assistance to specific vulnerable groups, including the sick, the elderly, women in labor, and poor girls in need of dowries.¹⁰⁹ They stated that due

¹⁰⁶ Officials claimed Antonius had rented land in the territory of La Cornella for 9 *lire* annually, when that property normally rented for 15 *lire* and 4 capons. Later they claimed that he had been granted the right to rent properties in both La Cornella and La Martinella for a total of 20 *lire* annually when those properties would customarily rent for 47 *lire*. ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 16 and 20.

¹⁰⁷ The officials also argued that the brothers had received more than they would have if Petrus had been alive: *cum ipsis fratribus provisum sint per dictum consorcium de bonis dicti domini Petri in maiori quantitate quam providisse ipse dominus Petrus si vixisse*. ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 16.

¹⁰⁸ These included dowries of 100 *lire* for domina Antoniola, 100 *lire* and 8 *soldi* for domina Catalina, and 103 *lire* and 4 *soldi* for domina Ursina, all sisters to the three brothers, as well as 100 *lire* and 16 *soldi* in a dowry for Quayna, daughter of Tonolo. ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 19. For Quayna's receipt of her dowry in 1380, see busta 117a, 96.

¹⁰⁹ The officials stated that the following groups were provided with assistance before others: *pauperibus egenis et senibus et infirmis iacentibus in lecto vel in paleis et mulieribus egenis iacentibus in partu et mendicantibus et polzellis pauperibus et verecondis que maritantur annuatim et aliis diversis casis pietatis et necessitatis*. . . ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 20. They also complained about the "extreme" debt the confraternity carried (*dictum consorcium ad presens valde in debitum sit*) stating that it would have to sell some of its property in order to meet its obligations to its creditors. ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 21.

to financial pressures they had difficulty providing assistance even to those earning 5 *lire* annually, in contrast to the Bonghi brothers' claims that they were poor because they earned only 40 *lire* each year.¹¹⁰

The response of the arbitrators of this dispute reveals that although the MIA sought to regulate requests from petitioners, it was not always successful. The arbitrators, Martinus de Mozzo, Cresimbene de Roariis, and Ugettus de Vertoa, who were chosen by both sides *concorditer et unanimiter*, were closely connected with the MIA.¹¹¹ All three men were officials of the confraternity, and as such they might have been expected to act in its favor.¹¹² But instead, they made concessions to each side, awarding the Bonghi brothers some of the property they had asked for, namely, the right to rent a piece of land in the area called La Martinella from the MIA at a half of the regular rent for a period of three years, as well as an annuity of 8 *lire* for each brother. In return, they required the brothers to cease demanding assistance from the confraternity, telling them not to "disturb or molest" (*inquietare, turbare nec molestare*) the MIA's other possessions, especially that property that had belonged to Petrus Bonghi. The arbitrators also warned the brothers that if they did not pay their rent to the MIA within the month of January each year, the rights to the property would devolve to the confraternity.¹¹³ The arbitrators' decisions suggest that shame-faced paupers were partly successful in their attempts to redefine the confraternity's charitable program, but the decisions also reflected the MIA's success in regulating its clients' demands for assistance.

A further petition from the same period reveals different strategies that the shame-faced poor employed to petition the MIA for help. The MIA's response in this case underscored the confrater-

¹¹⁰ . . . *dictum consorcium non habeat tot redditur ex quibus possit succorere pauperibus hominibus habitantibus de redditu solum liber quinque imperialium in anno . . .* ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 20.

¹¹¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 13.

¹¹² Martinus was the *canevarius generale*, while Cresimbene was one of the *coadiutori* of the minister in 1385. ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 12.

¹¹³ The property in La Martinella was to be rented to the Bonghi for 16 *lire* annually rather than its customary rent of 32 *lire* for a period of three years. ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 25–27. The rental agreement and annuity payments took effect in December, 1385. For the transactions, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 103–107, 118–122, 184, 236, 252–253, 376–377, 726, 730, 739. The MIA also gave a dowry of 100 *lire* to another Bonghi relative, domina Ayguana, in the presence of Tomasus de Bonghi, one of the petitioners, in April, 1387. See busta 117b, 262.

nity's discomfort with such requests. In the early 1380s, Betina, a daughter of one Laurentius de Anthia and wife of Albertolus Liprandi, wrote to Rodolfo Visconti, governor of Bergamo, to ask him for assistance.¹¹⁴ She stated that she and her husband, who had formerly been in the service of Rodolfo, were in danger of falling into poverty, since her father (who supported them) had been imprisoned for debt. In her letter to Rodolfo she noted that her uncle, Iohannes de Anthia, had died eleven years before, leaving property worth 4000 florins to the MIA, with the intention that it be distributed to the poor and miserable. Betina asked Rodolfo to approach the MIA for her, requesting that the confraternity provide 4 gold florins a month from her uncle's estate for both herself and her husband to pay for food and clothing.¹¹⁵

Betina's initial appeal to the MIA through the Visconti governor of the city allowed her to approach the confraternity from a position of strength, since the Visconti had cultivated a close relationship with the MIA in the later fourteenth century. But Betina's petition antagonized MIA officials, who immediately declared that it was full of "lies and falsehoods." They drew on their own close relationship with the Visconti to ask for Rodolfo's support for their cause.¹¹⁶ In a lengthy reply to the petition, the officials stated that Betina had misrepresented her social and economic circumstances. They argued that she was a wealthy woman whose dowry had totaled more than 500 *lire*, and who controlled more than a thousand *pertice* of land and several houses both inside and outside Bergamo. The officials also noted that she had recently sold several hundred *pertice* of land for 170 *lire* to Alessandro de Camisano, a former official of the company. Furthermore, they argued that Betina's father Laurentius had taken on the obligation to feed and clothe both Betina and her husband, and since Laurentius had received one half of Iohannes's estate, he, too, was wealthy and could enable Betina and her husband to live "honorably." Betina had claimed that she and her husband were in danger of falling into poverty because Laurentius was

¹¹⁴ For the petition, the MIA's response and the solution proposed by the arbitrators, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117a, 468–482.

¹¹⁵ ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117a, 470.

¹¹⁶ Officials noted that *ipsum consortium semper servatum et protectum fuit per magnificum dominum Genitorem vestrem*, referring to Rodolfo's father Bernabò. ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117a, 471.

in jail as a result of debts he had incurred and presumably could not pay. But MIA officials argued that he was not in jail, since he could be found walking the city's streets daily. As they had done with the Bonghi brothers, MIA officials also stated that the company's donations were meant for those in real need, not those like Betina who claimed poverty falsely.

Records of conflicts between the confraternity and *poveri vergognosi* reveal some important details both about the culture of the "noble poor" and tensions between the MIA and its clients in the later fourteenth century. Those paupers who, like those described above, were of high social rank, were aggressive—and sometimes probably dishonest—in their attempts to persuade the confraternity of their needs. But the MIA was equally determined and unwilling to accept the petitions of these paupers. By presuming to tell the confraternity who it should assist, these paupers displayed their own self-concept as agents, but their actions also highlighted a significant shift within the MIA. By the end of the fourteenth century the confraternity had narrowed its definition of who could receive aid, even defining an income level necessary to qualify for assistance. The MIA's responses to both petitions, as well as the officials' enumeration of the confraternity's financial commitments and re-definition of its charitable mandate, also indicate that the confraternity regulated and defined its almsgiving program more closely than it had in the past.

The response of the arbitrators in both of these cases indicates that civic authorities were sympathetic to the demands of both the confraternity and its petitioners. In both cases, arbitrators awarded the petitioners some of the property they had asked for, but they also obliged them to stop asking the confraternity for assistance. For instance, despite the MIA's protests about Betina's claims, the arbitrator required the confraternity to give the couple 130 *lire* in exchange for Betina's agreement to cease asking the MIA for aid.¹¹⁷ The eagerness of authorities to placate both sides further suggests that shame-faced paupers were successful in their attempts to redefine the confraternity's charitable program to suit their own needs even as the MIA continued to stipulate its need to heavily regulate its almsgiving.

¹¹⁷ ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117a, 481.

The majority of the individuals that were assisted by the confraternity in the later Middle Ages were not *poveri vergognosi* but rather the working poor, those who were unable to make ends meet because the wages they earned from their (usually unskilled) labor were too low, and did not stretch to accommodate the needs of a family. The approach of this large group of lower-status paupers to the confraternity was distinct from that taken by the shame-faced poor. Michel Mollat has identified the later Middle Ages as a time of pauperism, disturbances incited by paupers angry and frustrated over their inability to rise in society.¹¹⁸ In contrast, in Bergamo, lower-status paupers seemed more passive than their elite counterparts. They were less willing, or perhaps unable, to challenge changes to the MIA's almsgiving procedures in the late fourteenth century.

The acquiescence of the working poor to the MIA's highly-regulated almsgiving program can be seen through an analysis of records noting the distribution of alms to groups of paupers through their legal representatives, or proctors. The job of the proctors was to request and collect alms that the MIA owed the poor in the 1370s and after.¹¹⁹ Through their proctors, the poor in these communities created *de facto* associations. And although the associations appeared to challenge the MIA's almsgiving system, they were likely formed at the behest of the MIA's cellarers. An analysis of the significance of the associations thus reveals both the confraternity's increasing desire for control over paupers *and* the lack of resistance of those paupers in the face of such control.

The documentary record does not reveal explicitly by what means the poor associations came into being, but using the fragments that survive we can piece the story together. Testamentary bequests in Bergamo during the early fourteenth century often named "the poor" living in specific communities or neighborhoods as beneficiaries of alms to be distributed by the MIA or other bodies. So, for instance, in July, 1328, dominus Acursinus de Armenulfis, who lived in Bergamo but was originally from the nearby small community of Brembate

¹¹⁸ Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages*, 211–250.

¹¹⁹ Extant evidence suggests that these groups were not formally constituted as corporations, with statutes and officials of their own. However, as Frederic Cheyette has argued, non-corporate groups that selected such representatives to negotiate on their behalf "obtained, within limits, the other particular qualities of a corporate body . . ." Cheyette, "Procurations by Large-Scale Communities in Fourteenth-Century France," *Speculum* 37 (1962) 20.

Sopra, made a will in which he left an annual bequest of two *soma* of grain to the poor of Brembate to be distributed by the MIA. For several years after Acursinus' death, the MIA sent an official to Brembate, where he took "counsel" from the local priest and one or two "good neighbors" of Brembate to determine who would receive the bequest.¹²⁰ Similar bequests, similarly distributed, were made by testators to the poor of small communities such as Seriate, Nembro, and Stezzano, immediately outside the walls of Bergamo.¹²¹

For more than three decades after Acursinus died, the MIA distributed his bequest to the poor annually in Brembate Sopra with the help of local clergy and, occasionally, the consuls of the local commune.¹²² But after 1360 notices of the distribution vanished from the confraternity's records. Then, during the late 1370s, a group of paupers, through their proctor, requested the reinstatement of the donations.¹²³ This group, whose members were brought together by "the sound of the bells" and a "house to house" search of the community, claimed to represent all of the poor "of both sexes" living in their town.¹²⁴ They relied on proctors, known more specifically as *missos, actores, procuratores, syndicos, et legitimos defensorres et nuncios speciales*, as their legal representatives.¹²⁵ The language used to describe the proctors' responsibilities in these records emphasized the importance of their task. In the name of the poor of their community, they were to "ask and demand" alms from the MIA and other associations who owed them charity.

Despite their claims to inclusiveness, these groups of the poor were instead composed largely of male wage-earning householders.¹²⁶ Only

¹²⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 5 (1326–28) 251–254.

¹²¹ For donations to the poor of Seriate, see ASBg, Notarile, B. Seminati, busta 142, 96–103 and 885–889, G. fq A. de Panizollis, busta 159, 1–4; G. de Panizollis, busta 161, 35–37 and 162, 33–34; for the poor of Nembro, see, ASBg, Notarile, G. Panizolli, busta 162, 33–34; on the poor of Stezzano, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117a, 656–7, busta 117b, 671, busta 118a, 26, 211, 314, 421, A. Barzizza, busta 28a, 111, 187, 255, 308, A. Panizollis, busta 109b, 127, 267, 318, 329, and G. fq A Piazza, busta 17d, 6–8.

¹²² In December of 1358, for instance, MIA officials gave Matteo de Licate, a consul of the commune of Brembate one *soma* of grain *per dare in pane cocto pro elemosina ordinate pro anima Acursini de Brembate* BCBg, AB 229, 39r and 53r.

¹²³ ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117a, 686.

¹²⁴ ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 614.

¹²⁵ On proctors and their function in medieval law, see Donald Queller, "Thirteenth-Century Diplomatic Envoys: Nuncii and Procuratores," *Speculum* 35(2) (1960) 196–213.

¹²⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 118b, 343.

a few women were named as members of the groups. This was likely because the individuals named were heads of households, and it was rare for a woman of any status to hold that position in Italian communities. The middling status of the men named in the documents is clear because most of them used both a first name and a family name, while only a few people in each association were identified by one name or a nickname.

Another indication that the members of these associations could be described as the working poor lies in the fact that they were often identified as *vicini*, or tax-paying members of their local communities. For instance, in 1409, the document describing alms given by the MIA to the poor of Seriate listed the individuals receiving the assistance as at least two thirds of "all of the *vicini* and poor of Seriate."¹²⁷ In Florence, around the same time, individuals were required to pay taxes to the civic government if they earned a wage and owned property in excess of 100 *lire*, which was the value of a modest dwelling.¹²⁸ Earning a wage, however, did not keep people out of poverty in this period. The vulnerability of workers during this time of economic volatility has been well-documented by scholars.¹²⁹ John Henderson has noted that the confraternity of Orsanmichele in Florence aided significant numbers of families where the male head was working, but could not afford to support the household on his wages.¹³⁰ Christopher Dyer has identified a similar situation for workers in England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. He argues that a laborer might be able to live on his wage, but could not support a family with it.¹³¹ So while these paupers were workers, householders, and also taxpayers, they also required assistance to ensure the survival of their families.

To what extent can we argue that these poor workers organized themselves into associations in order to demand alms from the MIA? Michel Mollat has suggested that such individuals were more likely to seek to retain their "dignity" in the face of poverty than the

¹²⁷ ASBg, Notarile, G. fq A. Piazza, busta 17d, 7–8.

¹²⁸ Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages*, 174–175.

¹²⁹ See especially the work of Charles-Marie de la Roncière, *Prix e salaires à Florence au XIV^e siècle* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1982).

¹³⁰ Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 266.

¹³¹ Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 228.

completely indigent.¹³² Thus, we might assume that the poor themselves took the initiative and organized their own groups. After all, they represented themselves, since the proctors of each association were identified as paupers. In 1402, for example, Iohannes de Passeris, nicknamed Poletus, a *vicinus* of the commune of Brembate, and “one of the paupers of the place of Brembate Sopra,” served as the proctor of the poor of Brembate.¹³³ Each year, paupers in Brembate and other small communities met and selected their proctors from among their number.

But despite suggestions that the poor associations acted independently through their proctors to demand assistance from the MIA, there is also compelling evidence to suggest that confraternity officials, seeking an easy way to distribute bequests and prevent disorder among the poor, were responsible for the formation of the poor associations. The fact that several associations with the same demands sprang up around Bergamo during the same short period suggests that the seed of the idea had been planted by a central authority. Organizing the associations also made the MIA’s life easier. For example, proctors of the poor saved the confraternity time and energy by demanding alms directly from the MIA’s debtors, such as the proctor Arigus de Brembate who sought a payment from a man who owed the MIA a long-standing debt in 1377.¹³⁴ Further, although the associations stated their intention to seek alms from other bodies, in reality they only petitioned the MIA for assistance. In addition, their demands of the confraternity were limited to small amounts of alms, suggesting again that the associations were formed more for the convenience of MIA officials than to satisfy the real demands of the poor. The poor of Brembate, for instance, expected to receive two *soma* of grain annually, which was equivalent to about 4 bushels (about 330 liters), divided among more than one hundred people.¹³⁵ One or two liters of grain at most per household per year would not put significant amounts of food on these paupers’ tables. It seems likely that any association formed by paupers to demand assistance would have asked for more than a token amount of alms. As groups

¹³² Mollat, *Poor in the Middle Ages*, 211.

¹³³ ASBg, Notarile, A. Barzizzis, busta 28a, 173.

¹³⁴ Arigus received the bread owing to the association for the previous two years. ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 117b, 686.

¹³⁵ Dyer, *Standards of Living in the later Middle Ages*, 153.

formed by the MIA to simplify its almsgiving, the poor associations embodied the confraternity's continuing—and increasing—desire to control and contain its clients. They also reflected the growing helplessness of the working poor in the face of civic authorities such as the confraternity.

Significant changes took place within the poor associations in the fifteenth century, when civic and ecclesiastical officials took further control of them. After 1400, the groups that had formerly accepted alms from the MIA in Brembate, Stezzano, Nembro, and Seriate, began to broaden the categories of people they claimed to represent to include more than just the working poor. For instance, in 1409 the proctor of the poor of Seriate received alms from the MIA “in the name of all of the neighbors and men and the poor of Seriate and in the name of this commune of Seriate.”¹³⁶ This language gradually changed to reflect the waning presence of the poor in the associations. For instance, by the 1430s, the group in Brembate Sopra collecting donations from the MIA was known simply as “all the neighbors of the commune of Brembate Sopra” (*omnes vicini communis de Brembate Superiori*). It was only in the description of the donation that the term *pauperes* was used at all. Tellingly, in the notary's index of documents in this register, the payment was recorded as given to the “men of Brembate” (*homines de Brembate*) despite the fact that the MIA continued to record it as directed to the *pauperes de Brembate*.¹³⁷ The marginalization of the poor from these associations by members of their local community was made even more clear in a document from 1446. In that year, the notary recording the MIA's charitable donations in Seriate stated that “the men and neighbors of Seriate” had collected the donation. The notary then apparently remembered or was reminded that the donation was meant for the poor, and wrote the phrase “and the paupers” in superscript.¹³⁸ Changes to the associations became even more pronounced when the proctors of the associations were no longer paupers themselves. For instance, the proctor of the poor of Nembro in 1448 was the archpriest of the church of S. Martino.¹³⁹ None of these developments

¹³⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. fq A. Piazza, busta 17d, 7–8.

¹³⁷ ASBg, Notarile, G. Panizzoli, busta 161, 93. For the MIA's record of donations in 1423 and 1424, see BCBg, MIA archivio 728, 28v.

¹³⁸ ASBg, Notarile, G. Panizzoli, busta 162, 33.

¹³⁹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Panizzoli, busta 162, 204.

necessarily means that the paupers no longer received the bequests, but the changes do imply that members of their local community no longer allowed the poor to be responsible for collecting the alms themselves.

The formation of the poor associations, most likely under the aegis of the MIA, marked another step in the confraternity's continuing refinement of its charitable program in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Robert Brentano argues that the existence of proctors at the papal curia in the thirteenth century reveals the sophisticated workings of the papal court system.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the creation of proctors to represent the poor before the MIA suggests sophistication within the structure of the confraternity as well as its need for a smooth, streamlined almsgiving procedure in the fourteenth century. The changes to its charitable system that the MIA introduced in these years led an observer two centuries later to remark of the institution that "not a single loaf of bread was ever dispensed without a carefully considered vote by the governing body."¹⁴¹ The changing charitable culture of the MIA in the later Middle Ages thus prefigured its early modern face by embracing an active hegemony over the poor.

However, the confraternity's attempt to impose its authority over all of the poor was not entirely successful. First, the petitions for alms by shame-faced paupers indicate that some tried to shape the MIA's almsgiving program to suit their own needs. The response of the civic arbitrators in both of the cited cases was to grant some assistance to both parties, despite the MIA's protests. This result suggests that aggressive challenges to the confraternity could be partly successful. It further suggests that other authorities accepted the agency of this high-status group of paupers. Secondly, the takeover of distributions to the working poor by civic officials indicates that the MIA lost some of its grip on charitable donations by the mid-fifteenth century, a period which saw secular governments throughout Italy centralizing some charitable activities under their rule.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Robert Brentano, *Two Churches: England and Italy in the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) 18–42.

¹⁴¹ Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice*, 314.

¹⁴² Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 350. The MIA came more generally under the control of secular authority in this period. Giles Knox has argued that the Venetian governors of Bergamo in the mid-fifteenth century shored up the MIA for their own political gain. Knox, "The Unified Church Interior in Baroque Italy: S. Maria Maggiore in Bergamo," *Art Bulletin* 82 (2000) 681–682.

By the fifteenth century, the MIA's role as the city's almoner was in decline. Although numerous records from the 1410s demonstrate that the MIA continued to aid many individuals and groups with alms that varied from cash to wine to salt and meat, a decade later a deterioration in almsgiving was noticeable. By that time, the confraternity apparently gave assistance only to a small group of seven regular clients, whose poverty and infirmity, but also their social status, made them appropriate candidates for charity.¹⁴³ No women were among this group receiving regular cash assistance from the confraternity; women who received alms from the MIA in this period invariably did so only after they had given birth to a child, or because they were about to marry, or because one of their children was ill.¹⁴⁴ The only other donations to women were in the form of grain; a few women described as paupers received such donations, although not regularly.¹⁴⁵ By this time also, the MIA's monthly visitations to the city's neighborhoods had ceased, as had the officials' thrice-weekly distributions of alms to crowds at the confraternity's house. Officials did continue to distribute a few *lire* in alms to the poor of each quarter of the city at Christmastime.¹⁴⁶

This decline in the confraternity's almsgiving likely reflected economic difficulties within the company, as it collected only a little more in revenue than it spent. For example, in 1423, the cellarers recorded that they took in more than a thousand *lire* annually in rents on land, while they spent 982 *lire*.¹⁴⁷ This was a much lower total than the amounts collected in the mid-to-late fourteenth century, when, as we have seen, the confraternity amassed about 2600 *lire* annually.¹⁴⁸ Given this state of affairs, the confraternity would

¹⁴³ For records from 1380, see BCBg, MIA archivio 1814. For records from 1415, see BCBg, MIA archivio 725. Each week during 1423 and 1424, MIA officials gave amounts of cash ranging from 3 to 5 *soldi* to a group of seven men, identified as poor, elderly, and sometimes ill. See the weekly entries in BCBg, MIA archivio 728, 25r–49r. Some of the men had been receiving this assistance from the MIA for several years; records from 1415 show that one of the men, Tomasus, was freed from a prison by the MIA in that year. BCBg, MIA archivio 725, unfoliated.

¹⁴⁴ Such as the wife of Pezollus Bonghi, who was given 6 *soldi* in 1423 because her son was ill, and the widow of Benedicto, a servant, who received 2 *soldi* when her daughter fell ill. BCBg, MIA archivio 728, 30v and 31v. At most the confraternity gave two or three such women alms each week, compared to the regular donations to the seven men described above.

¹⁴⁵ BCBg, MIA archivio 728, 68r–70v.

¹⁴⁶ See the entries for these distributions in BCBg, MIA archivio 728, 43r.

¹⁴⁷ BCBg, MIA archivio 728, 24v.

¹⁴⁸ And we should not forget the MIA officials' statements about the indebtedness of the confraternity in their response to the Bonghi brothers' petitions.

not have been able to continue giving significant amounts of cash to the poor each month on top of its other commitments. But the clearly-defined identity of alms recipients in this period reveals that the MIA continued to seek to regulate its charitable distributions as closely as possible, even in the face of its dwindling ability to distribute assistance.

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the MIA's charity was marked by an ambivalent attitude towards the poor who received assistance. For a time during the fourteenth century, the MIA expanded its assistance to include more paupers, responding, as some have argued, to the "real needs" of such paupers. But this expansion was also accompanied by an attempt to reinforce the growing distinctions between rich and poor apparent in civic life, as well as, over time, a narrower definition of the identity of those eligible for assistance. The response of the poor to such developments was similarly multi-faceted. Some paupers found a voice with which to challenge confraternal hegemony, but others were unable or unwilling to resist the MIA's dominance. These responses articulate both the complex face of medieval poverty and the equally complicated position of the confraternity within the framework of civic life.

CHAPTER FOUR

YOU DO AND SAY EVIL! LAY MEN, WOMEN, AND THE CLERGY

In August of 1390, a man called Sozzonus de Lusana was passing a tavern on the road to the Val Seriana in Bergamo. There he saw a priest whose name he did not know, although he knew that the priest normally officiated at the church in the village of Gazaniga. The priest, reported Sozzonus, was playing dice (*ad taxilos*) with a man named Caginta de Serina and “many others.” Then Sozzonus noticed that the priest was trying to pawn (*impignare*) a hat (*capuzinum*) so that he might continue gambling. Sozzonus also heard the priest swear at the other players in the game. Unable to contain his disapproval, Sozzonus approached the priest, telling him that he was doing and saying “evil” (*male facitis et dicitis*), and suggesting that his behavior was dishonorable. He also noted that if the bishop’s vicar, the head of the episcopal court, were to find out about the priest’s behavior he would punish him. The priest responded angrily, telling Sozzonus that he “shit” on him and the bishop *and* his vicar, and would do what he liked. The confrontation ended as Sozzonus walked away.

Some days later, Sozzonus saw the priest again, this time in Albino, a small community outside the walls of Bergamo. There, Sozzonus accused the priest of being out of his senses (*estis iterum de illo sensu*) when they had met at the tavern. The priest replied that on the contrary, he was fine (*sum bene*), but Sozzonus pursued the matter, telling the priest that the following day he was going to tell the bishop’s vicar what he had seen and heard.¹ Once more the priest shared his low opinion of the ecclesiastical official with the lay man. Sozzonus then made good on his threat, going before the bishop’s vicar, and naming witnesses, including the men who were gambling with the priest at the tavern, who could attest to his story of the argument.

We do not know the outcome of this event. However, more important than the outcome, for us, is the way in which it illustrates how

¹ ACVBg, CAP 79 (S. de Cazzulonibus) 12v.

some laymen appointed themselves guardians of clerical morality, and turned to ecclesiastical institutions to regulate the actions of transgressive clerics. Further, the details of this story suggest not only that lay people wanted a morally pure clergy, but also that some lay men believed that they had the power to purify the clergy. The story of Sozzonus is just one of many documents contained in the records of Bergamo's diocesan archive which describe the relationship between lay people and clerics, including canons of the city's two cathedrals and parish priests. In this chapter I draw on many of these texts to discuss both how the rapport between the two groups changed over the course of the fourteenth century and how that rapport differed according to the social status and gender of the lay people in question.

The relationship between lay people and clerics in Bergamo, as elsewhere, was complicated by tensions between the ideal behavior expected of the clergy and the realities of the lives of clerics within the local community.² Despite the longstanding attempts of church reformers to set clerics apart from the laity, the men who served the churches of Bergamo and its diocese during the fourteenth century, most of whom were from the city and its region, remained closely connected to the community throughout their lives.³ Their testamentary bequests reveal the extent to which their lives were intertwined with those of their fellow citizens. For example, the 1361 will of Tomasus de Roariis, a canon of the cathedral of S. Vincenzo and a son of a citizen of Bergamo, illustrated the network of family connections that bound him to Bergamo. His principal heirs were a group consisting of his brother Crescimbene, his nephews Venturinus and Bertolaminus (the latter was the son of his brother Georgius, also a canon) and a woman called Pasquina, the wife of one Guillelmus de Carnevalibus, (she may have been Tomasus' sister). Among his

² There is a significant bibliography on the social formation of the medieval clergy on the Italian peninsula. See Robert Brentano, "Vescovi e collocazione socio-culturale del clero parrocchiale," in *Pievi e Parrocchie*, Vol. 1, 235–256. Also see Antonio Rigon, *Clero e Città: 'Fratalea Cappellanorum': Parroci, Cura d'Anime in Padova dal XII al XV Secolo* (Padova: Istituto per la Storia Ecclesiastica Padovana, 1988). For discussion of connections between parish priests and the lay community in one diocese, see Daniel Bornstein, "Parish Priests in Cortona," in *Preti nel medioevo* (Verona, Cierre edizioni, 1997) 165–193.

³ On attempts to differentiate secular clerics and laity from each other in one Italian diocese during the twelfth century, see Miller, *The Formation of a Medieval Church*, 50–58.

other bequests were 25 *lire* for another nephew, Iohannes, son “of the late priest Iohannes de Roariis” and 50 *lire* for his niece Monazate, to be given to her when she married.⁴ Although Tomasus left no significant bequest to his brother Georgius, the two men enjoyed a close relationship. Another canon of the cathedral told the bishop that they were in business together as merchants of wine and grain.⁵

Although family and business connections linked men like Tomasus and his family to the community in which they lived, local clerics in Bergamo also distinguished themselves from most lay people. Some were both wealthy and powerful. Cathedral canons were often members of the city’s notable families, and owners of substantial property inside and outside the city walls.⁶ In addition, their involvement in written culture also set clerics apart from most of the laity.⁷ While lay literacy rates were increasing in this period, few wills of lay people in Bergamo mentioned books as part of a testator’s estate.⁸ In contrast, priests’ testaments did include regular references to clerics’ ownership of books. In a will redacted in 1330, the priest Mafeus de Bontathini de Albenio, rector of the parish church of S. Cassiano, described an estate consisting of land and houses both inside and outside Bergamo, cash, and books. Among his books, Mafeus stated that he owned both a large and small missal (the large missal had been pawned for 15 *lire*), and a breviary. Mafeus also read for pleasure, shown in his ownership of a book “of legends and stories.” He even copied texts. Among his possessions was part of a new missal which he had copied himself (*quod scripsit ipse dominus Pre Mafeus*).⁹ Other priests also owned their own books, usually liturgical volumes, but sometimes also texts of canon law. In 1340 Pre Bonaventure de Roetta, priest of the church of S. Giovanni Evangeliste and later a minister of the MIA, donated several books to one of his relatives, a Franciscan friar, Laurentius de Roetta. These included a copy of

⁴ BCBg, MIA perg. 763.

⁵ See the complaints of the archdeacon Stephanus de Lanteris about the brothers’ business interests in the episcopal visitation of 1364. ACVBg, CAP 44 (F. Zenaglia) 193r.

⁶ Such as Castelinus de Rapazeltis, the canon of S. Vincenzo who founded the hospital of the same name.

⁷ M.T. Clanchy has argued that many local priests in England exhibited a high standard of learning by the thirteenth century. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993) 241–246.

⁸ A notable exception was the library of Alberico da Rosciate.

⁹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 6 (1326–1330) 449–454.

the *Decretum* and the *Decretales*, the *Sextus Decretalium*, the decrees of Clementine V (*Clementinus*) with, the priest stated “*aparatu domini Iohannis*,” presumably referring to their authentication by John XXII.¹⁰

Clerics’ sense of themselves as an elite group with access to special information was also visible in the group’s reactions to those they considered ill equipped for ecclesiastical responsibilities. For instance, when the *prepositus* of the cathedral of S. Alessandro, Petrus Ceste, complained that someone had written damaging graffiti (*verbis vituperosis*) about him on the walls of the canonry of S. Alessandro, his colleagues explained to the bishop’s vicar that this had happened because no one liked him. Their animosity seemed to stem from a sense that the *prepositus* did not know what he was doing: several of his peers told the vicar that he could not even celebrate the divine office.¹¹

While clerics thought of themselves as forming a separate culture, distinct from the laity, lay people’s sense of themselves as a coherent unit gradually eroded in the fourteenth century, and examining lay relationships with clerics sheds further light on this fragmentation.¹² These changes within lay religious culture were both shaped by and reflected in the growing involvement of high-status men within institutions of ecclesiastical authority. Through their complaints about the behavior of clerics to the bishop, lay men consolidated their own status at the top of the lay *ordo*, and they emphasized their role in shaping the comportment of the clergy in the community. The behavior of these lay men illustrates the way in which, in R.H. Swanson’s words, the clergy in the later Middle Ages were “threatened with instability,” since their authority “required recognition and willing acceptance by the laity.”¹³ Clerics in Bergamo were probably most concerned about the opinions of high-status men, who, more than women or the poor, had access to a forum in which they could speak out about the behavior of their local clergy.

¹⁰ For the donation of the books, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1340–41) 13.

¹¹ ACVBg, CAP 44 (F. Zenaglia) 190v and 200r.

¹² On the distinctiveness of clerical (as opposed to lay) culture in the Middle Ages, see Miller, *The Bishop’s Palace*, 5.

¹³ Swanson, *Religion and Devotion*, 238. On a contrasting view of the bond between priest and people (characterized as a feudal tie) see J. Avril, “A propos du ‘*proprius sacerdos*’: quelques réflexions sur les pouvoirs du prêtre de paroisse,” in *Proceedings of the fifth international congress of medieval canon law: Salamanca, 21–25 September 1976*, ed. S. Kuttner and K. Pennington, Monumenta iuris canonici, series C, subsidia 6 (Vatican City, 1980) 471. Cited in Swanson, *Religion and Devotion*, 236.

Court records provide extensive information about relationships between lay men and secular clerics. Many, such as the report of an incident in which the rector of the church of S. Michele de Archu and one of his parishioners got into a fight in the bishop's palace, punching and then cutting each other with knives, describe the breakdown of relations between members of the two groups.¹⁴ These incidents, while colorful, are more about extraordinary events and thus tell us little about the nature of daily contacts between clerics and lay men. Information about such ordinary relationships, and more particularly about lay men's perceptions of their priests, is found not in the records of investigations into criminal behavior, but rather in court records about issues of ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

In 1356, during a dispute between two clerics who each claimed jurisdiction over the souls of the faithful in the Valle de Scalve, located in the northernmost reaches of the diocese, 21 lay witnesses were called to give testimony about the spiritual and religious actions of these two local clerics. Scalvinus de Banteris de Lemen was the archpriest of the *pieve* of S. Pietro de Scalve, located near the village of Vilminore, and Iohannes de Bernardis was the priest of S. Giorgio de Vicomaiori de Scalve, but he also served at the newly-built church of S. Antonio da Padova in Schilpario, several kilometers away. The dispute between the two clerics stemmed from the archpriest's claim that the *pieve* had traditionally taken responsibility for the care of souls in Schilpario. In response, the priest claimed that since its erection in 1338 S. Antonio had been a parish church enjoying all *iura parochialia*, such as the right to baptize children and bury the dead. As a result, Iohannes argued, he should hold the rights to *cura animarum* in the parish. He further claimed that his church was subject not to the *pieve*, but to the church of S. Giorgio de Scalve, situated in the nearby community of Vilmaggiore. This was a familiar quarrel during a time in which sacramental rights were slowly devolving from rural *pievi*, which served a large area, to the smaller territorial unit of the parish.¹⁵ Throughout north-central

¹⁴ ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 64r–66r.

¹⁵ See Catherine Boyd, *Tithes and Parishes in Medieval Italy*, 154–160. To put the territorial sizes into perspective, a 1360 survey of *pievi* and parishes in the diocese of Bergamo counted fourteen *pievi* in the diocese, compared to almost one hundred parish churches claiming the right to baptize and bury the faithful. A. Caprioli et al., ed. *Diocesi di Bergamo*, map 1.

Italy, the creation of parish churches, located within the boundaries of small communities, made it more difficult for the faithful to conceive of the need to travel to worship in *pievi*, which served several communities together.¹⁶

The testimony that resulted from the dispute between the archpriest and the priest in the Valle de Scalve reveals that for several decades, lay men in Schilpario had participated actively in the spiritual life of their community and were familiar with the activities of their priests. The witnesses also revealed that they had an understanding of the territorial organization of parishes in the region, as they described the confines of the parishes in the area.¹⁷ The men who testified in this dispute made up the core of the community. For instance, when asked to recall who had been present in church over the years, they named each other. Some were related to the clerics in question; one was even a relative of both the archpriest and the priest.¹⁸ Through their answers to questions about the activities of the priest and the archpriest at the churches of S. Antonio, S. Pietro and S. Giorgio, the witnesses revealed that they attended services and received the sacraments regularly. One stated that he attended mass weekly throughout the year.¹⁹ Some described the churches as busy places, where one or two or even three hundred people from the community might gather.²⁰ It is not surprising that in a community in which so many lay people were actively engaged in religious life (or wanted to be seen as such) lay people would pay attention to the way in which their clerics provided spiritual services. Among other things, the witnesses described the priest and the archpriest blessing women who had recently given birth, also baptizing children, and hearing the confessions of the inhabitants of Schilpario.

¹⁶ Cinzio Violante, "Sistemi Organizzativi della cura d'anime in Italia tra medioevo e rinascimento," in *Pievi e Parrocchie* Vol. 1, 27. On the disintegration of *pievi* in Lombardy in the later Middle Ages, see Giancarlo Andenna, "Alcune Osservazioni sulla pieve lombarda tra XIII e XV secolo," in *Pievi e Parrocchie*, Vol. 2, 677–704.

¹⁷ See, for instance, the testimony of Betinus fq Alberti de Duxis de Lacavale, ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 17v.

¹⁸ Zenetus de Panarinus stated that he was "born with the mother of the archpriest" and the mother of the priest and Zenetus' father were sister and brother. ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 14v. Iohannes de Azallis was also a relative of the priest, although he did not know in what degree they were related. ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 46v.

¹⁹ ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 29r.

²⁰ ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 13r, 16v, 31r.

Sometimes they described specific moments in their lives in which these clerics played a role. One man noted that Pre Iohannes had celebrated the Eucharist for him seven years before during the “time of the great mortality.”²¹

As they took an active role in the religious life of their community, lay men in Schilpario also saw themselves as partners with clerics in their spiritual journey. They selected their own confessors, took a role in determining who would celebrate Mass in their church, and appointed themselves overseers of clerical behavior.²² Iohannes, the son of Betinus Angele, stated that some of the inhabitants of the *contrada* confessed at the *pieve*, while others went to the church of S. Giorgio, before S. Antonio was built.²³ Cusinus de Prata also told the court that he had sometimes confessed to the archpriest and sometimes to Pre Iohannes.²⁴ Others rejected the authority of the archpriest entirely in favor of that of the clerics at S. Giorgio. Codeferus de Codeferis recounted how before S. Antonio was built he had seen inhabitants of Schilpario go to the church of S. Giorgio to confess during Lent, and there they had stood at the church door and “talked secretly” with the priest of S. Giorgio, afterwards coming away and telling him that they had “accepted penance” from the priest. After S. Antonio was built, however, several inhabitants of Schilpario noted that they had confessed there instead.²⁵

Not only did these laymen select the celebrants of the Mass, they also carefully observed their behavior in church. Pasinus or Bampinus de Spatis told the court in Schilpario that both Pre Iohannes and the archpriest Salvinus had celebrated mass in the church of S. Antonio, and he emphasized that they did so in response to requests from the inhabitants of the parish.²⁶ A few witnesses remarked on

²¹ Testimony of Honoratus fq Petini de Duxis de Vicominori, ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 34r–37r.

²² The laity’s selection of their own confessors has been documented in other parts of Italy, although most of that evidence comes from pastoral visits of the fifteenth century, in which lay people admitted confessing to mendicants instead of their parish priests. See Zelina Zafarana, “Predicazione e Aspetti Devozionali,” in *Pievi e Parrocchie*, Vol. 1, 524–526.

²³ ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 27r.

²⁴ ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 37r.

²⁵ *vidi aliquando ex vicinis dicte contrate de Scripario stare a porte sup ecclesie S. Georgii et loquere secrete et postmodum quando receserant a presbytero dicere michi testi ego accepi penetenciam a tempore quatragesime.* ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 18r.

²⁶ *... et quod aliquando officabat dominus archipresbyter, et aliquando presbyter suprascripte ecclesie S. Georgi, sicut petebantur per vicinos cuiusdam contrate.* ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 46r.

the tone of voice with which their priests celebrated the mass: one cleric used “flat” words (*verbis planibus*), while the other used a “loud” voice (*alta voce*).²⁷ Others commented on the clerics’ dress, observing that one wore his robes to mass and to funeral services, while the other said mass without robes.²⁸ In other communities, differences of opinion over the choice of celebrants of the Mass led to strife and sometimes even violence. In 1390, Iohannes, son of Robertus de Bosellis, an inhabitant of the village of S. Giovanni Bianco, reported to the bishop’s vicar that the rector of the village church had threatened Iohannes’s brother Bonomus with a long knife (*daga*).²⁹ Iohannes told the court that the cleric had attacked Bonomus because of his insistence that a Carmelite friar be allowed to celebrate Mass at the church, a request, Iohannes maintained, that had the support “of the *vicini* of that *contrada*.” As a result of this confrontation a “furor” had broken out “between the *vicinos* and certain men” and several had been killed.

Although the inhabitants of Schilpario resolved their divided loyalties to clerics without resorting to violence, they exhibited a notable interest in the jurisdictional issues that separated the priest and the archpriest. Their testimony also highlights another important development in the Italian diocesan system in the later Middle Ages, as the laity pressured ecclesiastical officials to create more parish churches. In keeping with a longstanding tradition in which the inhabitants of rural areas claimed parochial rights for their local chapels and churches, the witnesses in Schilpario asserted that they had the right to determine the status of S. Antonio as a parish church.³⁰ To this end, several witnesses for the priest told the court that it was “public knowledge” that the church was a parish church, suggesting that public consensus could at least reinforce, if not define, the status of a church.³¹ As elsewhere in Europe during the later Middle Ages, areas of the diocese of Bergamo where lay people were obliged to travel to receive the sacraments were frequently those in which inhabitants themselves called for the establishment of parish churches.³²

²⁷ ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 34v–37r and 44r–46r.

²⁸ ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 34v–37r and 41r–43v.

²⁹ Iohannes also asserted that the cleric carried the knife with him “day and night.” ACVBg, CAP 79 (S. de Cazzulonibus) 13r.

³⁰ Boyd, *Tithes and Parishes in Medieval Italy*, 156–157.

³¹ ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 17v, 18v.

³² On similar movements in the Veneto, see Antonio Rigon, “Organizzazione

For example, in 1305, the inhabitants of Postcantu requested that their local church of S. Giovanni Baptiste be granted the rights of a parish church. They told the bishop that they travelled to the parish church in a nearby town, Sorisole, to bury their dead and receive the sacraments, but that they did not feel welcome there, and would prefer to worship at home. The bishop gave his assent to the appeal.³³ Lay people also asked that new churches be built for them. For instance, in the mid-1330s in the *contrata* of Foresto, in the Val Calepio, Count Egenius de Caleppio came before Bishop Cipriano of Bergamo to petition on behalf of the inhabitants of the *contrata* for the construction of a church with parochial rights. He noted that the inhabitants of the area had complained that their community was too far (*nimis remota sit*) from other churches, and that this made it especially difficult to bury the bodies of their dead and to hear religious services. The inhabitants of the *contrata* wanted the right to construct a church dedicated to the apostle Mark, stipulating that the church should have a cemetery attached to it. The bishop gave his consent for the church building to proceed.³⁴ In the mid-1360s, the arrival of plague in the diocese gave new urgency to calls for the appointment of clerics in some communities. In the town of Alzano Sotto in 1362, citizens complained that canons from the collegiate church of nearby Nembro, who had previously come to the town every Sunday and once during the week to celebrate Mass and administer other sacraments, were no longer coming as regularly. The canons stated that they were unable to make the “dangerous” trip between the two towns, and the citizens told the bishop that as a result many of those who had died during the recent plague had been buried without the sacraments.³⁵

Most of these requests for the construction of churches with parochial rights met with approval from bishops of Bergamo during the mid-fourteenth century. While this movement apparently reflects the clergy’s recognition of a strong, even autonomous lay voice within the diocese, ultimately the church-building movement reinforced the

ecclesiastica e cura d’anime nelle Venezie, ricerche in corso e problemi da risolvere,” in *Pievi e Parrocchie*, Vol. 2, 707–708. Also see Boyd, *Tithes and Parishes*, 160. For similar requests in England, see French, *The People of the Parish*, 25.

³³ ACVBg, CAP 4 (B. de Ossa) 159v.

³⁴ ACVBg, CAP 6 (A. Aneniis) 8v.

³⁵ ASBg, Notarile, V. da Poma, busta 98 (1367–71) 202.

control of clerics over lay initiatives. Although the requests for construction of new churches came from the laity, it was the bishop who gave permission for new buildings, and in doing so he emphasized the role of the clergy in consecrating the churches. For example, in 1363 Bishop Lanfranco described the procedure that the rector of a church in Foppolo should follow as that building was being erected. First, he instructed that the cleric was to repeat the *letanie* (litany), which was then to be followed by the placement of the stones in both the church and at the altar. Next, holy water was to be liberally sprinkled through the church and cemetery, followed by prayers and finally, the celebration of the mass.³⁶ Although lay people may have been instrumental in requesting the construction of the church in the first place, their contribution to the final consecration of the church was minimal.

As both clerics and lay men sought to regulate each other, tensions arose between the two groups. Another dispute from the Valle de Scalve, between Gasparinus de Dumottis, the archpriest of the *pieve* of S. Pietro de Scalve in 1370, and Antonius de Scalve, the vicar (*vicarius*) of the Valle de Scalve, who accused the cleric of several illicit acts, provides one example of how and why tensions between clerical and lay authority were articulated. Besides accusing Gasparinus of carrying on a longstanding sexual relationship with a woman, Antonius claimed that the archpriest had denied the spiritual authority of the bishop, defrauded the residents of the region of their money, and failed to take appropriate care of local churches. Antonius told the bishop that Gasparinus stated to the faithful “many times” that the bishop had no authority to absolve sins they had committed during a recent war. He further stated that Gasparinus, who was also a notary, had created a false copy of a will in order to benefit from the estate himself. Gasparinus denied these charges.³⁷ Finally, Antonius recounted how Gasparinus had given the position of custodian of the church of Colere to a woman called Jacoba, who rang the bells, prepared the altar, and “did the other things which are done in churches,” and in return collected the oblations from the church. Gasparinus protested that he had done so “with good intentions” and he told the court that he had, with the bishop’s urging,

³⁶ ASBg, Notarile, F. Zenaglia, busta 57 (1363–1364) 419.

³⁷ ACVBg, CAP 74 (S. de Cazzulonibus) 212r.

removed the woman and given the position to "a good man."³⁸ He did admit going to the papal court at Avignon, where he had requested and received a letter of absolution for the men of Schilpario from the pope. On his return with the letter (*unum folium papiri*), Gasparinus used it to grant absolution of sins committed during the war.³⁹

Antonius' reasons for making the accusations against Gasparinus may have originated in animosity between the two men over control of the prebends in the region dependent on the *pieve*. Antonius accused Gasparinus of seeking to control the appointment to a benefice (the church of S. Maria de Vicominori) in the territory. Gasparinus, Antonius alleged, had said that he would excommunicate anyone placed there without his consent.⁴⁰ But the witnesses called to comment on the accusations reported a slightly different story. One said that Antonius had told the inhabitants of Vicominori that he had chosen a candidate for the benefice himself.⁴¹ Gasparinus denied Antonius' accusation, but he noted at the same time that he had "procured a priest" for the church.⁴² Perhaps as a result of this dispute, Antonius reported that several people had told him that Gasparinus was saying "many bad things" about him. He said that he had confronted Gasparinus in the churchyard of the church of S. Maria in Vicominori, and had asked him why he was saying such things. Gasparinus had then told the nobleman that he "shit on him" [*e ve' n' cag*]. Relations between the two men were clearly tense, and this tension may have led Antonius to make his complaints to the bishop.

The preceding evidence of relations between lay men and clerics suggests that some lay men observed and regulated the behavior of their local clerics and that they tried to shape the ecclesiastical organization of their local communities.⁴³ But of course lay men did not

³⁸ ACVBg, CAP 74 (S. de Cazzulonibus) 210v.

³⁹ ACVBg, CAP 74 (S. de Cazzulonibus) 210r.

⁴⁰ ACVBg, CAP 74 (S. de Cazzulonibus) 211r.

⁴¹ ACVBg, CAP 74 (S. de Cazzulonibus) 214r.

⁴² ACVBg, CAP 74 (S. de Cazzulonibus) 211r.

⁴³ On the way in which late medieval lay people and bishops influenced each other, see Robert Brentano's remarks on the relationship between Margery Kempe and several clerics in "Vescovi e Vicari Generali," in *Vescovi e Diocesi in Italia dal XIV alla metà del XVI secolo. Italia Sacra* 43. (Rome: Herder Editrice, 1990) Tom. 1, 547–567. For the argument that some historians "demonize" ecclesiastical institutions as agents of the repression of spirituality in the later Middle Ages, see Cinzio Violante, "Sistemi Organizzativi della cura d'anime in Italia tra medioevo e rinascimento," in *Pievi e Parrocchie* Vol. 1, 12–13.

have the only say over the provision of spiritual services in their communities. Ecclesiastical officials continued to determine where the laity could baptize their children and bury their dead. For example, records hinting at the outcome of the dispute between the two clerics in Schilpario indicate that S. Antonio did not keep its status as a baptismal church, and that Iohannes did not remain its rector. In a list of churches owing taxes to the Visconti in 1360, which named all of the churches with parochial rights in the diocese, the church of S. Antonio did not appear. Furthermore, Iohannes de Bernardis was identified on the list only as the priest of S. Giorgio de Scalve.⁴⁴

Lay interest in the behavior and activities of clerics was matched and exceeded by episcopal attempts to regulate the clergy. Pastoral visits to the cathedral canons of S. Vincenzo and S. Alessandro in the 1360s and 1370s illuminate the growing concern among bishops of Bergamo about the ordering of the religious life in their territory.⁴⁵ These visits were part of a move in mid-fourteenth century Bergamo to strengthen ecclesiastical institutions in the diocese and bring everyone, both clerics and laity, more closely under the regulation of ecclesiastical officials.⁴⁶ Changes in the nature of these pastoral visits recorded in 1364 and again in 1371 illustrate the growing strength of ecclesiastical institutions in the diocese.⁴⁷ In 1364, the visitation of Bishop Lanfranco Saliverti to the canons of the two cathedrals of S. Vincenzo and S. Alessandro comprised a series of conversations with some, but not all, of the canons. Besides clerical involvement with women in the community, the bishop's main subject of inquiry was the clerics' relationships with each other. The bishop's letter following the visit focussed on the need to restore harmony within the two chapters.⁴⁸ Seven years later the content and

⁴⁴ L. Chiodi and A. Bolis, "Nota ecclesiarum civitatis et episcopatus Bergamo MCCCCLX" in *Bergomum* (1957) 88.

⁴⁵ On pastoral visits in the pre-Tridentine period, see A. Turchini, "Per la storia religiosa del '400 italiano. Visite pastorali e questionari di visita nell'Italia centro-settentrionale," *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 13 (1977) 265–290. Turchini notes that even when they appear to have been reduced to their most essential administrative apparatus, pastoral visits can convey important details about the spiritual life of a territory. "Per la storia religiosa del '400 italiano," 284. On the shared concerns of clerics and laity about church reform, see Brentano, *Two Churches*, 62–173.

⁴⁶ Brentano, *Two Churches*, 105–106.

⁴⁷ For the visit of 1364, see ACVBg, CAP 44 (F. Zenaglia) 189r–223r. For the visit of 1371, see ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 137r–170r.

⁴⁸ ACVBg, CAP 44 (F. Zenaglia) 208r.

the form of the visit had changed notably, indicating that the bishop and his assistants were interested in examining a wider range of issues within the chapters. While the notary recording the 1364 visit had concentrated only on writing down the answers the canons gave, rather than on the questions they were asked, his approach changed with the episcopal visit of 1371. This time, the notary recorded both the questions (30 in all) as well as the answer to each question under the question itself. Questions for the canons dealt with several broad themes, from the organization of the chapters' finances to the social and spiritual behavior of clerics, to the cleanliness of church buildings and liturgical objects.⁴⁹ The vicar's questions suggests that his concerns were similar to those of the lay witnesses from Schilpario, in that he seemed more interested in the way in which clerics celebrated the services and less in their moral failings or their guidance of the laity.⁵⁰

Developments within ecclesiastical institutions during the fourteenth century allowed ecclesiastical officials to more closely regulate the laity, as well as the clergy. One notable development was the increasing presence of the vicar general in diocesan matters, evident from the middle of the fourteenth century.⁵¹ Examining the activities of vicars general in Bergamo during the mid-to-late fourteenth century reveals that the actions of these officials extended episcopal authority over both laity and clergy. However, the vicar general did not only carry out the wishes of the bishop. Lay men also turned to him to control the actions of clerics. Thus, the presence of the vicar general in diocesan life both supported the authority of the bishop and at the same time increased the authority of lay men in civic religious life.⁵² Lay men and ecclesiastical officials worked in tandem to

⁴⁹ Only one question, the first, involved issues touching the laity directly. The vicar general asked if the canons knew of any heretics in the community. ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 138r.

⁵⁰ On similar approaches by the bishop Nicolò of Città di Castello a century earlier, see Brentano, *Two Churches*, 100–101. Zelini Zafarana argues that few pastoral visits in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries evince interest in the *cura animarum*, Zafarana, "Predicazione e Aspetti Devozionali," in *Pievi e Parrocchie*, Vol. 1, 502, n. 30.

⁵¹ On the importance of the vicar general to the Italian diocese, see the work of Robert Brentano, including *A New World in a Small Place*, 137–141 and "Vescovi e Vicari Generali," in *Vescovi e Diocesi*, tom. 1, 547–567. Also see Duane Osheim, *An Italian Lordship: The Bishopric of Lucca in the Late Middle Ages* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977) 42–44.

⁵² Brentano remarks that the diocese of Rieti under the vicars general of the

create a more coherent and coercive ecclesiastical administration during the later fourteenth century.

The responsibilities of the bishop's vicar within the diocese illuminate the complexity of episcopal government in Bergamo during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵³ The vicar, sometimes described as a commissioner (*vicarius et commissarius*) could stand in for the bishop during his absence, or in the case of an episcopal vacancy (*sede vacante*) such as that which occurred in Bergamo between 1339 and 1342.⁵⁴ As the bishop's representative, invested with all of his authority, the vicar could also visit ecclesiastical institutions. Pastoral visits in Bergamo during the mid-to-late fourteenth century were almost entirely handled by the vicar. And like the bishop, the vicar also served as a judge. This judicial role seems to have become the prime responsibility of the office during the later fourteenth century.

From at least the end of the thirteenth century in Bergamo, vicars were appointed by the bishop. Vicars might serve the entire diocese, or only part of it.⁵⁵ Unlike the vicars of some other Italian dioceses, who came to serve the dioceses from elsewhere, the vicars of Bergamo were usually from the diocese that they served, and those who came from outside often had ties to Bergamo or to the archbishopric of Milan.⁵⁶ They could be cathedral canons or members of regular orders, although members of the Franciscan and Dominican orders rarely, if ever, occupied the position. Most served for one

fourteenth century "was no longer a scattering of mountain tops and jurisdictional disputes. It was a place to which serious synodal constitutions could be projected and their results observed." *A New World in a Small Place*, 141. On the increasing use of coercion by bishops in the later Middle Ages, see Miller, *The Bishop's Palace*, 5 and *passim*.

⁵³ Brentano argues that the coexistence of bishops and their vicars in other Italian dioceses serves as evidence of "a sort of continuing government." Brentano, *Two Churches*, 80.

⁵⁴ During that period two vicars, both canons of the cathedral of S. Vincenzo, stood in for the bishop. ACVBg, CAP 9 (A. Anenis) 1r. Brentano notes it was normal practice in Italy for the entire cathedral chapter to stand in for the bishop during a vacancy. Brentano, *Two Churches*, 82.

⁵⁵ For instance, the bishop selected a vicar responsible solely for administrative activities in the region of Val Caleppio in 1335. ACVBg, CAP 7 (A. Anenis) 137r.

⁵⁶ Such as Iohannes de Boffis, a canon of the church of S. Sigismondi in Bologna, but who was identified as from Milan (*de Mediolano*). He served as vicar general in 1363. (ACVBg, CAP 44, F. Zenaglia). Daniel Bornstein has remarked on the tendency of the vicars of Cortona to come from outside the diocese, since few inhabitants of the diocese would have had the necessary legal training to fill the position. See Bornstein, "Parish Priests in Cortona," 167.

year, but some returned for additional terms, as did the canon Graciolus de S. Gervasio, who served as vicar general in 1370 and 1374.⁵⁷ Vicars in the fourteenth century normally had legal training, such as Guillelmus de Menutis, the priest and *iuris canonici peritus* who was vicar general in 1371,⁵⁸ and Leonardus de Feraris, a member of the order of the Celestines, also a canon lawyer, who served as vicar general in 1373.⁵⁹ The vicar was especially visible within the institutional framework of the diocese. He dispensed justice both from a seat (*banchum*) and from his own room (*camera cubiculari*) within the bishop's palace, where he also probably lived during his tenure.⁶⁰

Despite their elevated position within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, vicars general in Bergamo remained closely involved with the laity and clerics they governed. This close rapport may have caused problems for some officials, especially if they had previously been involved in disputes within the community. Less than ten years before he became vicar general, for instance, Guillelmus de Menutis, then *capelanus* of the chapel of S. Benedicto in the cathedral of S. Vincenzo, was accused of punching a man during a quarrel. After an investigation by the vicar general of the time, Guillelmus admitted that he had hit the man, although only after being provoked by what he described as "injurious words" the man had shouted at him.⁶¹ When Guillelmus became vicar general in 1371, he was not universally popular. During his investigation of the actions of a lay man accused of breaking into the female monastery of Valle Marine, the accused appeared before the court with his proctor to assert that Guillelmus was an incompetent judge.⁶² Guillelmus's involvement in the earlier dispute had likely colored the community's opinion of him.

For the most part, however, lay people regarded the episcopal court, and the vicar general himself, as useful tools for resolving difficulties with clerics. The court primarily heard cases involving quarrels between clerics and lay men, and these were not usually

⁵⁷ ACVBg, CAP 46 (F. Zenaglia) 124r and CAP 48 (F. Zenaglia) 81r. Graciolus also served in many other capacities in the Bergamasque church, including as the minister and *patronus* of the MIA in the mid-1360s. ACVBg, CAP 44 (F. Zenaglia) 201v. He was also the cellarer of the cathedral of S. Alessandro in 1378. ACVBg, CAP perg 189.

⁵⁸ ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 31r.

⁵⁹ ACVBg, CAP 48 (F. Zenaglia) 73r.

⁶⁰ See, for instance, ACVBg, CAP 44 (F. Zenaglia) 164v.

⁶¹ ACVBg, CAP 44 (F. Zenaglia) 163r–165v.

⁶² ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 107v.

concerned with lay perceptions of clerics' spiritual or ecclesiastical responsibilities. Instead, lay people turned to the court to regulate the moral behavior of their clerics. Certain clerics seemed to attract a great deal of attention from lay men, appearing in the records time and time again charged with immoral conduct. The priest Belebonus de Cavazzis was one example. In the 1360s and 1370s, Belebonus apparently led an active sexual life in Bergamo, and he was censured several times by local lay people as a result. In the 1360s, Belebonus was accused of "deflowering" and impregnating Bona, the daughter of the late Obertus de Pelacortis, and then keeping her as his "concubine." During the relationship she gave birth to a son, whom witnesses saw her breastfeeding in the priest's home in the village of Stezzano, where she and the priest ate and drank together. While Bona apparently entered the relationship willingly (and told a neighbor with apparent pleasure how often she and the priest had sex) the community came to see her as vulnerable, perhaps because she had been a virgin before the relationship began.⁶³ Lay men seemed to know Belebonus' reputation and some may have sought to bring him to justice themselves. For example, one evening in October of 1371, a citizen of Bergamo called Antonius, nicknamed Fontana, son of the late Benedictus de Agazzis, was standing at the door of the female monastery of S. Grata ad Columpnellos just as the priest was leaving the building. Antonius asked who was there, explaining in his deposition that he could not see the other man clearly in the dark. The man, "speaking in the language of foreigners" (in a non-Bergamasque dialect?), told Antonius that he would soon see who he was. Antonius then saw the priest go into the church of S. Grata and enter the choir there, but the cleric quickly left the church and, reported Antonius, took hold of his beard, insulting him and shouting at him to leave him alone. A scuffle ensued, which brought the nuns of the monastery outside. Antonius asked the priest to come with him to the bishop, but the priest replied that he would not. Then Antonius reported that the assembled nuns began verbally attacking him, calling him names and demanding that he leave them all alone. Among them, he reported, was a nun who was known to be the concubine of the priest. The priest was eventually declared *infame* by the bishop's vicar, while the abbess of the monastery was warned to

⁶³ For the case of Bona, see ACVBg, CAP 45 (F. Zenaglia) 57r–64v.

keep her charges more closely in check.⁶⁴ It is possible that rather than encountering the priest by chance outside the monastery, Antonius had waited for him and then used their encounter as an excuse to bring him before the court to accuse him of sexual transgression.

The case of Belebonus is extreme, and it should not be taken as representative of lay attitudes to all clerical sexual relationships. Indeed, some scholars have argued that long-standing sexual relationships between clerics and local women may have been granted public approval because they kept clerics stable and happy.⁶⁵ Certainly those who testified about the sexual transgressions of clerics before the episcopal court did not always seem to do so with great zeal. This was the case with the inhabitants of the village of Chinollo, who in 1342 came before the vicars general seeking to punish the former rector of their local church, since, they alleged, he was a “fornicator” who had frequently kept “suspect women” in his home.⁶⁶ If the villagers had been extremely concerned with the rector’s behavior, one would think they might have complained earlier. Similarly, witnesses describing the sexual activities of the archpriest Gasparinus Dumottis in the valle de Scalve gave rather half-hearted reports of his transgressions. Among the other accusations levelled at him by the nobleman Antonius de Scalve was the fact that Gasparinus kept a concubine with whom he had shared a house and had a child. Antonius claimed that for about three years, Gasparinus had lived with a woman called Cusina. Antonius and other witnesses also noted that sixteen months before the case began, the woman had left Gasparinus’s house to go to Bergamo, when she was apparently pregnant. One witnesses described her as *grossa et granda*, and another described her as having “an inflated stomach.” But none of the witnesses appears to have seen the child, and no one seemed to know whether she had given birth to a girl or a boy. They did know that the woman returned to Gasparinus after the birth and continued to live with him.⁶⁷ But while Antonius condemned this relationship (or saw it as a useful piece of evidence with which to attack his adversary) it is not clear whether any of the other lay men who described Gasparinus’s

⁶⁴ For the entire record, see ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 129r–133r.

⁶⁵ Daniel Bornstein argues that clerical concubinage was not always a significant issue for lay people, especially those living in rural areas. Bornstein, “Parish Priests,” 173–174.

⁶⁶ ACVBg, CAP 10 (A. Anenis) 3–10.

⁶⁷ ACVBg, CAP 74 (S. Cazzulonibus) 211r–215r.

relationship with the woman shared Antonius's distaste for the priest's domestic arrangement. Their testimony corroborated Antonius's story, but no witness offered further criticisms of their own.

This apparent ambivalence among lay men about clerics' involvement in sexual liaisons was shared by clerics themselves. Although they were told repeatedly by their superiors to avoid such relationships,⁶⁸ several sources from Bergamo reveal clerics living with women and publicly acknowledging the children born into those relationships. For instance, in the bishop's 1364 visitation to the canons of the cathedral of S. Alessandro, five canons (of a total of fifteen) were reported to be living with women and their children in the canonry, while two others admitted that they had done so in the past.⁶⁹ The episcopal court only seems to have punished those clerics whose behavior violated norms of secular domestic life. For instance, while most reports of clerics cohabiting with women were not pursued by the vicar or the bishop, a priest who had a sexual relationship with his father's widow (and who had a child by her) was fined 55 *lire* by the bishop in 1368.⁷⁰

Further indication that both ecclesiastics and lay people tacitly accepted clerics' sexual liaisons, as long as these remained within boundaries established by the community, comes from records about the children born into those unions. For example, in 1381, a cleric named Antoniolus, the son of the priest Iacobus de Bontatibus, who had died more than ten years before, made an annual donation of 36 *soldi* to the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna, where Antoniolus held a benefice. The donation was intended to ensure the celebration of his father's *noale*, the annual anniversary of his death. Unlike some arrangements for this celebration, which left the specific details up to the individual cleric who received the donation, Antoniolus ensured

⁶⁸ Many church councils had warned against such behavior, including Lateran III, whose canons stated that clerics who did not abandon their sexual partners were to be *ab officio et beneficio alieni*. The constitutions of Lateran IV developed these points further, prescribing penalties for bishops who turned a blind eye to their clerics' sexual liaisons. Michele Maccarone, "Il IV Concilio Lateranense," in *Pievi e Parrocchie*, Vol. 1, 137.

⁶⁹ ACVBg, CAP 44 (F. Zenaglia) 189r–201r.

⁷⁰ ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 236r–237v. Elisabetta Canobbio has identified similar situations in fifteenth century Como. She notes that witnesses reserved explicit criticisms of priestly sexual involvement for those who transgressed other boundaries, such as an archpriest who became involved with a very young girl. See "Preti di Montagna nell'Alta Lombardia," in *Preti nel Medioevo*, 233–237.

that the celebration would take place in the same way each year, stipulating that the priest of S. Alessandro was to call together twelve priests from parish churches in Bergamo each year on the penultimate day of September, and that together they would celebrate the anniversary in the customary way (*prout moris est*).⁷¹ Antoniolus' attention to these details probably reflects his own background as a cleric, but it also demonstrates a concern for the state of his father's soul and an acceptance of his father's status.

But the blurred boundaries between clerics and lay people that resulted from the establishment of sexual relationships were problematic for some members of the clergy. Even the priest Belebonus de Cavazzis, whose sexual relationships made him notorious among lay people and clerics alike, suffered from feelings of guilt about his relationship with Bona, the daughter of Obertus de Pelacortis. He made these feelings known to a lay man, Petrus, son of the late Degoldus de Zenolis of Stezzano, who testified that the priest had approached him one day asking if they could have "two words." The priest told Petrus that he wanted to "cast off" the sin he had committed by keeping Bona as his concubine, and instead wanted to arrange a marriage for her to "give her honor." He then intended to go to Bologna for a year, where he hoped to "live well" (*stare bene*), presumably without a woman. When the priest asked Petrus if he, an unmarried man, would take Bona as his wife, Petrus assented. The two then agreed that the priest would provide Bona with a dowry of 25 *lire* and a bed. In the end, however, the priest's repentance was short-lived, since Petrus complained that not only had he not provided the dowry, but the marriage did not take place, since the cleric took Bona to live with him in another town, causing "great shame" to the lay man and eventually resulting in the condemnation of the priest before the episcopal court.⁷² The story did not end well for Bona, either. Several months after he was condemned by the court, the priest apparently formed another relationship, this time with a married woman, and we know nothing about what happened to Bona or her child.⁷³

⁷¹ ASBg, Notarile, B. Adelasio, busta 114, 177–180.

⁷² ACVBg, CAP 45 (F. Zenaglia) 57r–63v.

⁷³ The woman's husband came before the vicar general to complain about their conduct. ACVBg, CAP 45 (F. Zenaglia) 64r.

While lay people used church courts to control or shape the behavior of their clerics, in turn, ecclesiastical officials during the fourteenth century tried to control lay activities in both the sacred and secular spheres. The episcopal court records of the mid-fourteenth century reveal that the Church attempted to become more involved in the regulation of marriage during that period. Women, especially, became the targets of this regulation. As they regulated women's behavior within marriage, clerical and male secular authorities worked hand in hand to locate women in a subservient position within the ecclesiastical and lay realms.

Marriages in the Middle Ages were created not by clerics but by the couple themselves in their promises to each other in words of the present tense.⁷⁴ During the twelfth century, however, clerics sought to play a greater role in the making of marriage. Accordingly, the church made marriage one of the sacraments, requiring clerics to act as witnesses to the marriage ceremony. But these changes were overshadowed by the more secular aspects of the ceremony. On the Italian peninsula, the celebration of a marriage could take place anywhere, and a notary played a key role in it. For instance, the marriage celebrated in Bergamo on the last day of December in 1376 between Antonius, a teenaged son of the Bonghi family, and Adelaxia, the twelve-year-old daughter of the late Nicolo de Pappis, involved two clerics as witnesses. However, other elements of the ceremony seemed entirely secular. For instance, it took place at the house belonging to Adelaxia's grandmother (on her mother's side), and the questions for the couple were read out not by a cleric but by a notary.⁷⁵ In Tuscany a final ceremony sometimes took place after this, when the bride was led to her husband's house and the marriage was consummated (if consummation had not occurred earlier).⁷⁶

⁷⁴ The literature on marriage is too vast to summarize here. On Italy specifically, see the essays in Trevor Dean and Kate Lowe, eds., *Marriage in Italy, 1300–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) also see Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, especially “Zacharius, or the Ousted Father: Nuptial Rites in Tuscany between Giotto and the Council of Trent,” 178–212.

⁷⁵ For the record of the ceremony, and the earlier betrothal of both Adelaxia and her (younger?) sister Dorotea, see ASBg, Notarile, L. Aliprandi, busta 112 (1374–76) 364–366. For a discussion of the variety of spaces in which marriages were contracted in late medieval London and the significance of these spaces to the idea of marriage, see Shannon McSheffrey, “Place, Space and Situation: Public and Private in the Making of Marriage in Late-Medieval London,” *Speculum* 79 (October 2004) 960–990.

⁷⁶ On a wedding as a series of ceremonies in Florence, see Klapisch-Zuber,

Although the clergy played a limited role in the making of marriage in Italy, such was not the case when marriages broke down in the fourteenth century. At that point, those in the midst of the dispute sometimes turned to the episcopal court to try to resolve their marital issues. In these cases, the clergy became closely involved with lay people in their marriages, as they decided which marriages were canonically valid and which were not. Most of the records that survive deal with men's complaints about women's behavior, possibly signalling the strong connection between lay men and ecclesiastical authorities in the community. Even where records do survive of cases brought forward by women against their husbands, the court's decisions reflect the late medieval suspicion of the power of female sexuality, for instance by holding women responsible for trapping men in relationships. For example, in 1362, Anexia, the wife of Girole de Scalve, complained to the court that her husband had left her soon after their marriage to live with another woman, Iacoba de Ceresollis of Lemen. The episcopal vicar responded by writing to the husband and his "concubine," telling them to stop living together, and warning Iacoba that she must "repel" her lover from her door if he tried to enter her house.⁷⁷ Not only the husband, but also his female lover were thus made responsible for the adultery which had been committed. Further, in a similar complaint brought by Betinus, son of Andrea de Ponteranica, against his adulterous wife Caterina, her lover was not held responsible for her behavior, displaying the discrepancy in treatment of men and women in this situation. Although the lover was named in the court records, he was never contacted directly by the court, as Iacoba had been.⁷⁸

Although men more usually made complaints about the behavior of their wives within their marriages, women sometimes appeared before the court to defend their actions. However, the outcome of most marriage disputes suggests that the court tended to listen to men more than women in these cases. As an example, we can turn to the case of Martinus, son of Rogerius de Cavazzis, and his wife

"Zacharius," 187. Klapisch-Zuber separates the ceremonies into a "contractual" phase and a "highly ritualized festive phase." She compares these secular ceremonies to those of France, where clerics exercised more hold over the making of marriage from the twelfth century onwards.

⁷⁷ ACVBg, CAP 44 (F. Zenaglia) 114r.

⁷⁸ ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 193r–203v.

Anexia.⁷⁹ They had been married for three years when, in 1355, she returned to live at her father's house. Martinus went before the episcopal court to try to force Anexia to return, but she refused, stating that she had left Martinus because he had a physical defect which she argued made it impossible for them to consummate their marriage, despite their "daily, weekly, and monthly" efforts over the three years. Martinus appeared before the court to deny this claim (although he was not required to present evidence to support this denial) and the court took his side, eventually excommunicating Anexia and her father. Other examples from the records of the episcopal court during the mid-fourteenth century reinforce the suggestion that the court tended to instruct women to return to their husbands.⁸⁰ There are no examples in the extant records of women asking errant husbands to return to them. This imbalance more likely reflects women's reticence to come forward rather than men's fidelity, and it further supports the argument that the court was more likely to uphold men's control of marriage.

Although vicars general—and lay men themselves—attempted to regulate women's role within marriage, some women also saw the episcopal court as a tool for their own use, ensuring that their male relations brought their conflicts with clerics before court officials. In 1384, for instance, a woman called Sibillia was walking on a street in the neighborhood of Borgo Canale when the rector of the church of S. Maria de Brene, seeing her, called out "where are you going, you rotten slut (*rufana marzida*)?"⁸¹ Sibillia was embarrassed by this encounter, but she stood up for herself. She told the cleric that she would tell her husband about what had happened and he would tell the bishop, which he proceeded to do. Although Sibillia did not appear before the court herself, she did ensure that the cleric was called before the court to explain his behavior. In addition, she also ensured that the court record reflected how she had defended her honor when the rector defamed her.

⁷⁹ For the case, see ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 9r–12v.

⁸⁰ For examples of cases in which women left their husbands and the court ordered them to return, see ASBg, Notarile, F. Zenaglia, busta 57 (1364) 12; ACVBg, CAP 47 (F. Zenaglia) 31r/v; ACVBg, CAP 48 (F. Zenaglia) 65r.

⁸¹ ACVBg, CAP 77 (S. de Cazzulonibus) 156r.

Clerical Attempts to Regulate Lay Men

Clerical regulation of lay people could be seen outside the episcopal court in institutions such as hospitals, which brought together clerics and lay people. Clerics claimed a close relationship with many hospitals, as founders or administrators of the institutions.⁸² The bishop claimed the right to visit those hospitals directly under his supervision, including the leper hospital, S. Lazzaro.⁸³ Such attempts at intervention could provoke tensions between clerics and lay people. For instance, over a twenty year period in the fourteenth century, a dispute between clerics and laymen simmered over the collection of donations at hospitals in two parishes in Bergamo. The records of this clash reveal both lay men's response to clerical interventions in their associations and the desire of the bishop to maintain the separate status of both groups.

The first extant record of the dispute dates from 1363, when clerics holding benefices at the parish church of S. Alessandro in Colonna found themselves at odds with the minister and members of the local flagellant confraternity and hospital, S. Maria Magdalena. The clerics claimed the right to elect someone to collect donations (presumably in the hospital's oratory, a few steps away from S. Alessandro) for the confraternity and hospital on the feast of Mary Magdalen. The members of S. Maria Magdalena countered this claim, stating that only they should collect the alms, since the work of the hospital was that of lay people, who both gave and collected alms for the poor there.⁸⁴ The flagellant company also argued that these alms were the means of sustenance for the poor residents of the hospital and should therefore be turned over to them. The clerics, on the other hand, argued that lay people could not collect the donations,

⁸² The list of churches and religious houses owing taxes to the Visconti in 1360 included several of the city's hospitals, including S. Lorenzo, S. Grata, and S. Caterina, which were seen as comparable to monasteries. See Chiodi and Bolis, "Nota Ecclesiarum . . ." 88.

⁸³ For the visit to S. Lazzaro see BCBg, PCB 3859. Visitations of hospitals in other cities were common in this period. For instance, in Padua during the late thirteenth century, the statutes of the commune established that the *podestà* and bishop together should visit all of the city's hospitals yearly. See Gian Maria Varanini, "Per la storia delle istituzioni ospedaliere nelle città della Terraferma veneta nel Quattrocento," in *Ospedali e Città*, 120–121.

⁸⁴ The document states: *opus dicti hospitalis processit a personis laycis facientibus ibi elemosinas*. ACVBg, CAP 659, D.

since canon law forbade it.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, the record of this debate does not reveal how the issue was resolved. But a related record dated 1383 reveals that the same conflict continued to simmer, now involving the two hospitals in Bergamo run by flagellant confraternities and their oratories in dispute with clerics holding benefices at both S. Alessandro in Colonna and another parish church, S. Alessandro della Croce.⁸⁶

The issues which had given rise to the quarrel of twenty years before, involving clerics claiming the right to collect alms at the oratory of the *disciplinati*, had apparently not been resolved, since the 1383 claims were almost exactly the same. The ministers of both the flagellant confraternity of S. Maria Magdalena and that of S. Tomaso challenged priests from the two churches, claiming that they had collected and kept alms that rightfully belonged to the hospitals. Unlike the previous dispute, when no solution was apparently found, this time, Bishop Branchino Besozzi imposed an arbitrated settlement on the groups. The bishop's response to the argument revealed an attempt to preserve a balance between clerical and lay interests within the hospital. The bishop began his statements with an emphasis on the rights of the parish clerics to govern religious corporations that fell under their jurisdiction. He reminded everyone involved that the hospitals fell within the boundaries of the churches of S. Alessandro in Colonna and S. Alessandro della Croce. The rectors of those churches, he stated, had access to all parochial rights and should be able to exercise them freely (*debeant habere omnia iura parochialia et eadem iura inibi exercere*), meaning that the rectors could celebrate mass once per day at the altars of the churches of S. Maria Magdalena and S. Tomaso. Furthermore, the minister of the flagellant confraternity was bound to present two wax torches made of two pounds of wax each to the rectors of the two churches on the feast of S. Alessandro (in August) each year.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ ACVBg, CAP 659, D. The text reads: *contra formam iuris et canoniarum sanctionum necnon dictarum litterarum quod facere non potuerunt cum essent layci et ad eos non spectabat.*

⁸⁶ An eighteenth-century copy of this conflict and its settlement titled "controversia sulla Scuola dei Disciplinati" copied by Iohannes Baptista, son of dominus Petrus de Consolibus is held in the parish archive of S. Caterina, Faldone 51, fondo VI, no. 1.

⁸⁷ A dispute over the division of donations between clerics and lay people in a hospital took place in the hospital of SS. Giacomo e Lazzaro alla Tomba in Verona in the early fifteenth century. There, the lay governors of the hospital emerged victorious, with the help of a bull from Pope Alexander V, dated 1409, in which he

While the bishop was careful to reassert the rights of the parish clergy over the flagellant groups, he also reinforced the rights of the lay corporations to collect their own donations. He stated that all donations made within the churches or hospitals belonged to the hospitals and the poor in those hospitals, and not to the clerics. He did note, however, that all other legacies left to the churches were the property of the church itself. The bishop also warned the lay minister of the flagellants that the groups could not have more than one priest of their own choosing living *continue* in the churches of S. Maria Magdalena and S. Tomaso. Still, the bishop added, members of the confraternities could "do what they like in the said churches and hospitals," thus ensuring that the lay people involved in these institutions preserved their autonomy.⁸⁸ Ultimately, this dispute reveals that during the later fourteenth century, lay men in their confraternities were eager to assert their autonomy from clerics, while parish priests were threatened by assertions of such lay autonomy. Bishops, on the other hand, were caught between the two groups, and attempted to re-establish equilibrium by reasserting some distinctions between them.

Not all contact between clerics and lay people provoked conflict. In their daily exchanges, clerics and lay people shared many concerns in common. The overlapping interests of lay men and ecclesiastics were visible in the activities of lay-administered boards for the maintenance of church buildings. These boards, known as *fabbrica*, oversaw aspects of church decoration and also took responsibility for the maintenance and inventory of sacred and liturgical objects in churches.⁸⁹ Frequently in the second half of the fourteenth century,

stated: *cum per laicos videlicet per comune Verone fuerit ordinatum et per laicos regatur, ut cantant iura antiqua* . . . Cited in Varanini, "Per la storia delle istituzioni ospedaliere nelle città della Terraferma veneta," *Ospedali e Città*, 124.

⁸⁸ A similar dispute erupted between the Veronese parish church of S. Vitale and a flagellant confraternity in the parish during the fifteenth century. Giuseppina de Sandre Gasparini argues that these conflicts originated when the flagellants in Verona took on sacred roles that normally lay with the parish clergy, likely because these roles were no longer being exercised by local clerics. In this way, she argues, the confraternity threatened the parish church by taking on duties that transcended its functions. De Sandre Gasparini, "Confraternite e 'Cura animarum' nei primi decenni del '400," in *Pievi, Parrocchie, e Clero nel Veneto dal X al XV secolo* (Venezia: Deputazione di storia patria per le Venezie, 1987) 314.

⁸⁹ A similar responsibility as that of church wardens in England. See Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 133. The need to maintain liturgical objects such as chalices and patens had been acknowledged by the church for several centuries. Constitution 19 of Lateran IV contained detailed discussion of this subject. See Maccarone, "Il IV Concilio Lateranense," in *Pievi e Parrocchie*, Vol. 1, 154–157.

these boards were formed by confraternities. Most notably in Bergamo, in that period the *fabbrica* of S. Maria Maggiore was composed largely of officials of the MIA, with the minister and the general cellarer playing a leading role.⁹⁰ Aside from confraternities, the work of *fabbrica* was also undertaken by *vicinia* associations, those groups of male lay householders living in a particular neighborhood. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries *vicinia* associations provided the clergy with liturgical objects and furnishings for their local churches.⁹¹ For instance, in 1390, the consuls of the *vicinia* of S. Andrea provided the new rector of their parish cleric with a long list of such materials as he assumed the position: these included close to thirty books. Among those were six missals, copies of the gospels, breviaries, antiphonies, a Bible, the letters of Gregory the Great, and several psalters. As well, the members of the *vicinia* association declared that they owned (for use in the church) a *Maestà*, several robes, chalices, and crucifixes, and numerous other liturgical objects.⁹² This list symbolized how such associations, apparently founded for secular, political purposes, also took on the same responsibilities as the *fabbrica* for their local churches.⁹³ This overlap of responsibilities was common in other cities, too. In Cortona during the mid-fifteenth century, for example, the inhabitants of the parish of S. Maria of Sepoltaglia claimed ownership of objects from their church in order to gain access to many items that had been pawned by previous clerics.⁹⁴ Unlike the previous example of tensions between parish clerics and local confraternities over the collection of donations, lay-run *fabbrica* did not provoke disputes between clerics and lay men. Instead, clerics expected such associations to take a role in maintaining churches. For instance, in his will of 1330, the rector of the church of S. Cassiano left funds to the MIA to provide for the “rebuilding” of the church, specifying that the men of the *vicinia* should do the work on the

⁹⁰ For appearances of MIA officials in the *fabbrica*, see, for instance, ASBg, Notarile, L. Foppa Buzzoni, busta 24b, 111–113; G. Fanconi, busta 118b, 289–290; and G. Ulciporci, busta 149.

⁹¹ In the late thirteenth century the *vicinia* association of S. Pancrazio gave its newly-elected priest a set of liturgical objects for use in the church. See Caminiti, *La Vicinia di S. Pancrazio*, 140.

⁹² ASBg, Notarile, B. Bondo, busta 103, 465–470.

⁹³ Giles Knox describes the conflation of *vicinia* and confraternal responsibilities in sixteenth-century Bergamo. (letter to the author).

⁹⁴ Bornstein, “Parish Priests in Cortona,” 183.

church. If they were not willing to rebuild the church, then the priest instructed the MIA's officials to give the money to the poor.⁹⁵

Shared concerns of clerics and lay people—and a lack of conflict between them—are also apparent in the records of an association which regulated and cared for waterways around the city. During the thirteenth century, as in other cities across the peninsula, clerics, religious, and lay men in Bergamo formed an association to care for aqueducts, bridges, and canals in and around the city.⁹⁶ The association was known as the *universitas Seriole Murgulane*, referring to the river Serio and the Morlana *roggia*, a trench or canal which flowed out of it through the Borgo Palazzo neighborhood of the city.⁹⁷ As land owners, both clerics and lay men had an interest in maintaining and developing water use in the city. Thus, the formation of the society was likely a defence against possible incursions by “usurpers” wanting to organize the waterways to suit themselves.⁹⁸ The commune of Bergamo was also interested in regulating the canal, and urged landowners to ensure (at their own expense) that water was maintained in the *roggia* so that the mills which relied on it would be able to work properly.⁹⁹

Officials described the association as comprised of both clerics and lay men (*tam clericorum quam laycorum et tam laycorum quam clericorum*).¹⁰⁰ There were two leaders, or *guide*, of the association, one a cleric and the other a lay man, and each was granted an assistant or *coadiutor*

⁹⁵ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 6 (1330–34) 110–114.

⁹⁶ On similar initiatives in Milan, see Patrick Boucheron, “Water and power in Milan, c. 1200–1500,” *Urban History* 28 (2001) 180–193. On other cities on the peninsula, see Roberta Magnusson and Paolo Squatriti, “The Technologies of Water in Medieval Italy,” in Paolo Squatriti, ed., *Working with Water in Medieval Europe: Technology and Resource Use* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2000) 217–266.

⁹⁷ On the company, see “‘La Roggia Morlana’ dalle medioevali ‘Societas et universitas Seriolae Murgulae’ ad oggi” (Provincia di Bergamo: Quaderni del Centro Documentazione Beni Culturali, III, 1988). The company, extensively restructured and now known as the “Compagnia della Roggia Morlana,” still exists and maintains its own archive.

⁹⁸ Boucheron posits this development for Milan in the early thirteenth century. Boucheron, “Water and Power in Milan,” 186.

⁹⁹ The thirteenth and fourteenth-century statutes stated that the “rector” of the company: *teneatur facere reinere aquam in lecto seriole Murgulane, sic quod molendina unum vel plura, que sunt sub unaquaque domo in ipsa seriola possint bene masnare ad expensis illorum, quorum sunt opsa molendina*. For the fourteenth century statute, see *Lo statuto di Bergamo del 1331* (Milano, 1986) Coll. XV, VIII, 222.

¹⁰⁰ Archivio della Compagnia della Roggia Morlana, Bergamo, faldone 15, fascicolo 1, 1r.

of his own status.¹⁰¹ A few details from the extant records indicate that clerical members took precedence in the association. First, meetings were held in the bishop's palace. In addition, the records of those meetings were kept by the official notary of the episcopal court, Francescus Zenaglia. Furthermore, although there were more lay than clerical members of the association (during the 1360s, there were 20 members, and of those, seven were clerics and 13 were lay men), clerics had an equal share in the votes on the association. The association was long-lived, but not particularly influential in civic life. Its members met infrequently during the fourteenth century, and in mid-century they elected representatives to spare them the trouble of coming to regular meetings.¹⁰²

*Mendicants and poor men:
Venturino da Bergamo's pilgrimage of 1335*

All of the lay men we have encountered so far in this chapter were of middling or high social status. Poor men were at best marginal players in the evolving relationship between the laity and the clergy in the fourteenth century. As high status lay men articulated the separate status of the lay *ordo* within confraternities and other associations, they appear to have forgotten about the existence of these disenfranchised people. Writing such people back into the history of lay-clerical relations in this period is essential but complicated, given the paucity of records that deal with them. In Bergamo, fortunately, a small series of sources details the relationship between a mendicant preacher and his poor followers. These sources also indicate something about the attitudes of higher-status people towards the poor and their religious activities.

Rather than forming strong relationships with the secular clergy, paupers may have had closer ties with members of the mendicant orders. Certainly the mendicants had always presented themselves as close to the poor by virtue of their own adoption of poverty as a way to salvation. Although by the fourteenth century the itinerant

¹⁰¹ See the list of members present at a July, 1367 meeting in ACVBg, CAP 45 (F. Zenaglia) 92r. For the election of a cellarer and sindic of the association for that year, see ACVBg, CAP 45 (F. Zenaglia) 93r–96v.

¹⁰² ASBg, Notarile, M. Blotti, busta 26, 45–47.

life of most mendicants had long since vanished, as they settled into a stable life with their own churches and houses, members of both the Franciscan and Dominican orders continued to travel from city to city preaching and hearing confessions. As they did so, many preachers came into contact with the poorest inhabitants of these cities. In Bergamo during 1334 and 1335, the Dominican preacher Venturino da Bergamo gathered many such marginal people around him and then led them in a “pilgrimage of sinners” to Rome.

In the fall of 1334, Venturino, the son of Laurentius de Apibus, a teacher of grammar and official of the MIA, arrived in Bergamo to visit his family after a seven-year absence from the city. Venturino’s family was well-established in the religious and social life of Bergamo. His father had connections to scholarly and religious associations in the city; as well as belonging to the MIA, he was a member of the Franciscan Order of Penitence, and his wife Caracosa, Venturino’s mother, was the daughter of Bonaventure de Adraria, a consul of the *vicinia* association of S. Pancrazio,¹⁰³ and a member of the MIA himself.¹⁰⁴ Venturino’s religious commitments went beyond those of his family, however. He joined Bergamo’s Dominican house of S. Stefano in about 1318, when he was still a teenager. By the early 1330s he was living in Bologna, where he had become a well-known preacher.¹⁰⁵

The writer of a text describing Venturino’s activities in Bergamo in 1334 and 1335 claims that Venturino had not travelled to Bergamo that year intending to preach. Venturino claimed that he thought preaching in the city would be a wasted effort, describing the citizens as “hard heads” (*populum dure cervicis*). But when he arrived in the city in the autumn of 1334, the prior and brothers of S. Stefano, the Dominican house he had joined in his teens, asked him to preach. He did so for the first time on the feast of Saint Matthew, in late September. Many people came to listen to his sermons, and “many sinners were converted publicly.”¹⁰⁶ Both Venturino and the writer

¹⁰³ BCBg, MIA archivio 605, 3r.

¹⁰⁴ BCBg, MIA archivio 718, 322r.

¹⁰⁵ Studies of Venturino da Bergamo include Clara Gennaro, “Venturino da Bergamo e la Peregrinatio Romana del 1335,” in *Studi sul Medioevo Cristiano Offerti a Raffaello Morghen* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano, 1974) 375–406. Also see Daniel Bornstein, *The Bianchi of 1399*, 37–39. The source for details of Venturino’s life is the *Legenda*, edited by A. Grion in *Bergomum* 30 (1956) 38–110. The *Legenda* includes both Venturino’s Life and a transcript of the inquisition of his activities by Pope Benedict XII in 1335.

¹⁰⁶ Grion, “Legenda,” 85.

of the *Legenda* that describes his life emphasized that so many people came to listen to him that the church and squares of the city could not hold them. Venturino, perhaps optimistically, estimated the number of listeners at 40,000.¹⁰⁷ These popular sermons continued until the feast of S. Andrea in December of the same year.

Following these public conversions, Venturino began to look for some way to help his listeners to do penance. He meditated for three weeks, and at the end of that period he claimed that “the Lord inspired me to go to Rome with these sinners.” There, he planned to engage his followers in penitential works and allow them to receive all the indulgences for sins committed that pilgrimage to Rome could provide. He proposed this idea to the people on the kalends of January, 1335, and he reported that his followers became more open-minded than they had been previously (*qui actenus duri extiterant inceperunt flecti*).¹⁰⁸ He then began to travel around the diocese preaching this pilgrimage and making peace between warring groups, later claiming that in a month he succeeded in concluding more than one thousand such truces.¹⁰⁹ At the end of that period, he had gathered a large group around him, and they prepared to leave Bergamo for Rome.

The pilgrims traveled through central Italy wearing white robes and black scapulars marked with a tau cross, and with ropes or *cordae* against their chests. As they walked, they chanted *Penitentia, Pax et Misericordia*. When they stopped at churches along the way those who wished could practice self-flagellation. Walking in small groups, often several days ahead or behind Venturino himself, the pilgrims stopped at a number of cities on the way (and were refused entry at a few of them, including Milan and Lodi) and reached Rome on March 21. Venturino remained there for about 12 days, leaving quietly one Sunday without letting the others know of his departure. The reasons for his departure are unclear, although Clara Gennaro has suggested that he had decided to approach the pope to ask for approval for his religious movement and thus receive official sanction to engage in a reform movement.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ *Ecclesie vel plathee civitatis non poterant eos capere*. Grion, “Legenda,” 86.

¹⁰⁸ Grion, “Legenda,” 87.

¹⁰⁹ One example of a peace agreement drawn up at this time is in ASBg, Notarile, A. da Crene, busta 16, 228. However, there is no mention of Venturino’s influence on the creation of the agreement.

¹¹⁰ Gennaro, “Venturino da Bergamo,” 390.

Independent confirmation of the pilgrimage in Bergamo is contained in a description from the notarial register of Albertus Lizzia, who in the late 1330s described the events of the winter of 1335. Albertus wrote that in the middle of the month of February of that year “many people from Bergamo” (he claims there were 2400) went to Rome with Venturino, “who was called the messenger of God” (*noncius dei*). Albertus also claimed that Venturino had established truces among fighting groups throughout the diocese. Albertus’ connection to the events was quite personal: one Tuesday in February his father, Venture Lizzia, and 17 others from the region of S. Vigilio and Sudurno had attended a gathering of the pilgrims, known as *Romae*, and others in the field called the *prato S. Alessandro*, where they ate bread and fruit and drank water. Albertus claimed that there were almost three thousand people at this gathering.¹¹¹

The pilgrims with whom Venture Lizzia lunched in the field of S. Alessandro were, by Venturino’s own account, from the margins of society in Bergamo and its surrounding territory. He characterized them as *peccatores horrendi*, and “five thousand of the worst men in Italy” who had committed murder, sacrilege, and incest.¹¹² Elsewhere he tempered this, saying that some of them were nobles from Bergamo and other cities, but he described the others as *pauperes*.¹¹³ Characterizing Venturino’s followers in this way lent support to the contention that his preaching could convert even the most hardened sinners. However, their description as marginal figures may also have been accurate. Other chroniclers across the peninsula, too, sustained that the pilgrims were “thieves and murderers.”¹¹⁴ We also know that the elite of Bergamo’s religious community did not join the pilgrims. None the officials of the MIA went on the pilgrimage, evidenced by the fact that the confraternity’s election was held on March 5 of that year, during the pilgrimage, and no officials were missing from that meeting (ironically, the meeting took place in the Dominican house of S. Stefano).¹¹⁵ Venturino’s family did not participate in the pilgrimage, either. In early March, after the pilgrims had departed,

¹¹¹ ASBg, Notarile, A. Lizzia, busta 25b, 98.

¹¹² Grion, “Legenda,” 86.

¹¹³ Grion, “Legenda,” 94.

¹¹⁴ Clara Gennaro suggests that those who had committed grave sins were more likely to join pilgrimages to Rome, since there they might ask for absolution. Gennaro, “Venturino da Bergamo,” 383.

¹¹⁵ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 39.

Laurentius de Apibus was still in Bergamo. Records indicate that he was involved in a financial transaction that took place in the MIA's house at that time.¹¹⁶

As persons of high status, Venturino's family may not have wanted to be associated with a pilgrimage composed of such marginal characters. Certainly the *Legenda* suggests that his family were unsure about his status as a religious prophet. At one point during this period, the text states, Venturino saw his brother Iacobus speaking affectionately with his young son. Venturino told him not to love the boy too much, since he would soon die. Iacobus refused to believe his brother's prophecy, but only eight days later, according to the *Legenda*, the boy was dead.¹¹⁷ As well, details in Laurentius' 1337 will suggest that he was not on good terms with his son. The lengthy text of the will listed substantial bequests for all of Laurentius' other children, but not Venturino. Then, at the very end of the document, almost as an afterthought, Laurentius instructed that a small annuity of 5 *soldi* be given to his son, and explicitly stated that Venturino could not ask for any more from the estate.¹¹⁸

Laurentius would have had reason to be displeased with his son. The pilgrimage Venturino had organized was not greeted enthusiastically by the papacy, then resident in Avignon, and Venturino found himself called before Benedict XII to account for his actions. It has been suggested that Venturino's pilgrimage was feared not because of the marginal nature of its adherents, but because of its overtly political overtones and the suspicion that Venturino was interested in overthrowing the pope and taking his place.¹¹⁹ Despite this the spectacle of large numbers of marginal individuals marching from one city to another, during a period in which paupers were coming increasingly under the control of both civic and ecclesiastical officials, must have been threatening to those officials. Such spontaneous movements were unsettling to the growing need for order within the Christian church.

¹¹⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 41.

¹¹⁷ Grion, "Legenda," 67. There is a slight possibility that Iacobus accompanied Venturino on the pilgrimage, since in his description of his actions to the pope Venturino mentioned the presence of *fratre meo carnali*, who stayed with him even when he left Rome. No other evidence suggests that Iacobus was present on the pilgrimage, however. Grion, "Legenda," 93.

¹¹⁸ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 6 (1330–34) 176.

¹¹⁹ Gennaro, "Venturino da Bergamo," 393–400.

In June of 1335 Venturino appeared before the pope to answer a long series of questions about his actions both before and after leading the pilgrimage.¹²⁰ He described how, having left Rome, he had decided to come before the pope to ask permission to organize a new pilgrimage or Crusade. He envisioned this movement, like the previous pilgrimage, as one of marginal people, this time “fifty thousand of the worst men in Italy,” who would follow him to death for Christ and peace.¹²¹ Unsurprisingly, Venturino did not gain papal approval for this projected Crusade. Instead, the pope exiled him from Italy and forbade him from preaching or hearing confessions.¹²² But this restriction was not permanent, and on the death of Benedict XII and the accession of Clement VI in 1343 Venturino was restored to favor and once again preached and heard confessions. He eventually traveled to the east from Italy, where he again preached and visited the sick, “bringing strength to the Christians there.” He died in Smyrna in 1346.¹²³

Venturino’s pilgrimage provided a religious opportunity for those who were denied more conventional paths to Christianity. Its lack of popularity with the ecclesiastical leadership, explained as the result of its leader’s problematic identity, was also likely a result of the way it was so visibly set against more orderly and institutionally-defined models of religious life. The characterization of Venturino’s pilgrims as paupers and terrible sinners distinguished them from other pious lay people, such as the members and officials of confraternities, since those who belonged to confraternities were scrutinized for their moral uprightness. This example suggests that by the mid-fourteenth century, paupers had become a problem for the church, as they were for secular authorities. As a group their relationship with the clergy was seen as distinct from that of higher-status people. The example of Venturino’s pilgrimage and responses to it in Bergamo and elsewhere further highlights the increasing fragmentation of the laity during the fourteenth century.

¹²⁰ The questions and Venturino’s answers, and the papal response to these, are all contained in Grion’s text, see “Legenda,” 76–97.

¹²¹ Grion, “Legenda,” 94.

¹²² Grion, “Legenda,” 97.

¹²³ Grion, “Legenda,” 107.

PART THREE

WRITTEN RELIGION

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In the first two parts of this study, I documented how the developing connections between elite lay men and civic authorities impacted the structure of confraternities, hospitals and local churches, and I examined how the laity's experiences within those associations changed over time. In particular, we saw that the opportunities available to women and poor men within the institutions of Christian life narrowed during this period. In this final section we turn away from the study of institutional developments to examine religious commitments expressed within a text, the last will. Comparing the pious bequests of lay men and women contained in their last wills allows us to explore further the impact of gender, in particular, on religious experience. Male and female property-holders made wills in similar numbers during the fourteenth century, and the form and much of the content of these texts did not differ according to the gender of the testator. However, contained within wills is evidence that women were forced to use creativity to make their bequests give them the religious and spiritual satisfaction that came more easily to men. Documented within these wills are also some of the moments in which social stratification in the religious realm gave way to solidarity, most notably at the onset of plague in Bergamo in 1361.

CHAPTER FIVE

TESTAMENTS, GENDER, AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE

In September 1353, Benvenuta, the widow of Alessandro Tarussi, a cauldron-maker in the town of Verzia, enlisted the notary Gerardus Soyarius to redact her will.¹ In that document, Benvenuta named as her universal heir one Iohannes de Prezate, another cauldron-maker (perhaps a former colleague of her husband). But her will also contained substantial bequests for many religious associations inside and outside Bergamo. She left cash to several confraternities, including 100 *lire* for the MIA, 10 *lire* for the flagellants of S. Giacomo della Porta, and 100 *soldi* for her local Misericordia of Verzia. She also gave 10 *lire* (for repairs) and a candle to her local church, S. Nicolo de Verzia as well as a bed-cover and 100 *soldi* to its priest. She donated a further 100 *lire* to the Dominican house of S. Stefano for repairs to their church, and asked to be buried there. She also left small amounts to other mendicant houses, monasteries, and hospitals inside and outside Bergamo. As well, she left numerous bequests for the poor, including clothing, salt and cash, and she asked that 10 *lire* from her estate be used to provide dowries for poor girls. Benvenuta interspersed these religious bequests with many legacies for individuals, including her servants and friends. She further used her will to settle property issues with her neighbors, allowing a man named Guillelmus Payta to build a wall between her property and his. But at the end of the will, she claimed all of these bequests as *pro anima* legacies for the benefit of her own soul and that of her late husband.

If we turn from Benvenuta's will to that of her husband Alessandro, we find some clues about why Benvenuta formulated her will in this way. In his will of 1335, Alessandro Tarussi made only a few specific bequests to pious causes. He left 5 *lire* to each of three religious houses in the city and to the poor in six hospitals. He also left 10 *lire* for repairs to the Dominican church of S. Stefano, and asked to

¹ See ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 11 (1352–54) 179–183.

be buried there (as did his wife eighteen years later). He also left similar amounts of cash to pay for anniversary services to be held after his death.² But Alessandro's will gave little space to religious bequests. Instead, much of the document contained a description of the pieces of property and household goods he was leaving in the care of Benvenuta, who would enjoy the use of this property during her lifetime. However, in return for the assistance he promised Benvenuta during her life, Alessandro instructed that after her death, she was to give all of this property to "miserable persons" for the benefit of the couple's souls. Read through the filter of these instructions, Benvenuta's later bequests—the dowries to poor girls, the clothing and salt for paupers, the various bequests of clothing and household furniture to poor servants—all appear to be an attempt to satisfy his instructions. It would therefore be a mistake to read her will solely as a reflection of her independent pious principles. Testaments like those of Benvenuta and Alessandro remind us that these documents served as both "mirrors of death" and "mirrors of life" as they were the result of a dialogue between the testator and the members of his or her social circle, as well as the product of the testator's own religious priorities.³

Scholars have long seen wills as an unusually transparent window onto both inheritance customs and religiosity during the Middle Ages. Certainly no other records evoke such personal information about so many people who might otherwise be absent from the historical record.⁴ At the same time, wills can be a problematic source for investigating the religious culture of individuals. All testaments established how property bequests were to be distributed among family and friends, but not all gave equal weight to pious bequests, perhaps because the testators had already made living donations to pious associations.⁵ The previous example of Alessandro and Benvenuta's

² See ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–35) 150–153.

³ On the coexistence of multiple layers of meaning within medieval testaments, see Antonio Rigon, "Orientamenti Religiosi e Pratica Testamentaria a Padova nei secoli XII–XIV (prime ricerche)," *Nolens Intestatus Decedere*, 42.

⁴ Robert Brentano's body of work contains numerous thoughtful readings of medieval Italian wills, all driven by the desire to know "the color of men's souls." See, for instance, the chapter entitled "Last Wills and Testaments—and the Apples of Secinaro," in *A New World in a Small Place*, 275–319. Also see Brentano, "Considerazioni di un lettore di testamenti," in *Nolens Intestatus Decedere*, 3–9.

⁵ On this point, see Shona Kelly Wray, *Communities and Crisis: An Investigation of the Libri Memoriali of Bologna during the Black Death* (Brill, in press) 206. On the same

wills also hints at further difficulties posed by using the will as a gauge of individual religious culture. As Benvenuta's will shows us, the form and even the content of testamentary bequests could be shaped by others, including family members, the testator's confessor, and the notary who took the testator's oral instructions and wrote them down as a will.⁶

Rather than viewing wills as providing direct, unmediated access to the individual soul, we should instead think of them as texts which articulate multiple voices. As such, wills need to be studied within the particular social, cultural, and political contexts in which they were generated.⁷ This chapter takes such an approach, employing as its source base nearly five hundred testaments, about half by men and half by women, redacted by several notaries during the fourteenth century in Bergamo. Since the MIA saved wills containing bequests directed to it in its vast parchment archive, more than half of the wills in this discussion contain bequests for that large confraternity. Smaller confraternities are not as well-represented in these wills, in part because those companies did not have the same archival capacities as the MIA and thus wills containing bequests directed to these confraternities were not all brought together in the same location.⁸ Given these factors, a quantitative analysis of religious bequests contained in these documents would yield imprecise results.⁹ But perhaps more

argument, see Sandro Carocci, "Parocci e fedeli a Tivoli," in Paravicini Bagliani and Pasche, eds. *La Parrocchia nel Medio Evo*, 155.

⁶ As Attilio Bartoli Langeli puts it: "... il testamento risulta dal gioco tra un'autonomia personale ... e una forte pressione istituzionale, impersonata dal confessore e dal notaio." "Nota introduttiva," in *Nolens Intestatus Decedere*, xiv. Also see Armando Petrucci's comments about the formal nature of testaments in the same volume, Petrucci, "Note su il testamento come documento," 11–15. For more on technical aspects of notarized documents in general, see Alberto Liva, *Notariato e Documento Notarile a Milano* (Rome, 1979) esp. 89–133.

⁷ Thus shedding light on what Gabriel Spiegel has called the "social logic" of the texts. Spiegel, "History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text" in *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 25–28. For a view of the testament as a "unilateral" act, see Gerardo Gatti, "Autonomia privata e volontà di testare nei secoli XIII e XIV," in *Nolens Intestatus Decedere*, 19.

⁸ That said, the parish archive of S. Alessandro in Colonna does contain a large cabinet of rolled, uncatalogued parchments dating from the fourteenth century, and at least some of these are testaments.

⁹ To date, there have been a few notable (and controversial) attempts to undertake a quantitative analysis of testaments. See Samuel K. Cohn's *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death*. On concerns about the statistical analysis of testamentary bequests, see Martin Bertram's review of Cohn's *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death*,

significantly, such an analysis would ignore the textual quality of wills. Wills are valuable as a source for understanding the religiosity of lay men and women because they narrate, sometimes in remarkably idiosyncratic ways, the intermingling of individuals' pious and social concerns. Furthermore, just as gender and social status shaped lay men and women's access to the institutions of religious culture during their lives, a close reading of wills from Bergamo shows that these social constructs sometimes—but not always—impacted the way men and women articulated their last wishes in their testaments.

The redaction of wills

By definition, testaments were legal documents requiring the intervention of a notary in their creation. Understanding the way in which notaries approached the redaction of a will can shed light on the multi-layered complexity of testaments and the religious culture they represent. Like other documents created by the notary, the testament was normally *nuncupativo*, that is, it originated in a set of oral statements by the testator which the notary took down and then turned into a written expression of those statements, that is, an *instrumentum*. On the way to becoming *instrumenta*, testaments normally passed through two or three stages, starting with notes the notary took “on the scene” on small scraps of paper and continuing to his later elaboration of those notes into protocols, known as *imbreviature*.¹⁰ The final “extracted” version of the document, written on an individual parchment, could then be created from the notarial protocol when it was needed.¹¹ The witnesses to this type of will would be aware of the content of the document, since they were present while the testator made his or her wishes known to the notary.¹² Clearly,

“‘Renaissance Mentality’ in Italian Testaments?” *Journal of Modern History* 67 (June, 1995) 358–369. For further critique of Cohn’s approach and conclusions, see Shona Kelly Wray, “Boccaccio and the Doctors: Medicine and Compassion in the Face of the Plague,” *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004) 301–322.

¹⁰ Such notes survive in some notarial protocols. For an example, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1346–47) 57–58.

¹¹ For a description of the process of creating notarial documents in Milan, see Liva, *Notariato e Documento Notarile a Milano*, especially 101–104.

¹² On the creation of the *testamento nuncupativo* and changes to its form between the high and later Middle Ages, see Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *I Testamenti dei Cardinali del Duecento* (Roma: Società alla Biblioteca Vallicelliana, 1980) LXXX.

then, the testament was not an unmediated example of a testator's autonomous final wishes. We neglect important characteristics of the will if we characterize it solely as an "auto-eulogy."¹³

Wills fixed an important moment in life, that of the contemplation of illness and death as well as the salvation of the soul. But wills were also a part of a larger process of planning for death, and the devolution of property after death might not occur in the way that the testator initially imagined. Wills could be challenged by heirs, and testators could revoke them at later moments in their lives. As Thomas Kuehn notes, "the will was the beginning and basis of challenge, in comparison to intestacy, for both the testator and the heirs and legatees."¹⁴ The form of wills also changed over the course of the fourteenth century. In the early years of the century they were often brief and resembled each other in their language and content. By the end of the century, some wills—more often those of the wealthy and powerful—were longer and more varied in their expressions of piety than they had been earlier. Such textual and contextual matters need to be taken into account as we examine wills for what they can tell us about the religious culture of lay men and women.

Since wills were produced by notaries, they were public documents and were accessible to public authorities. During the fourteenth century, as the Visconti expanded their authority over Bergamo's civic government, the content of wills became increasingly important in the public sphere. Before the mid-fourteenth century, Bergamasque testators had frequently placed conditions in their wills leaving property to religious associations—especially the MIA—in the event that their heirs died with no offspring of their own. As the Visconti began to consolidate their control over the city and its revenues, they searched for ways to expand the amounts they collected from the populace. In the 1353 redaction of Bergamo's statutes, the Visconti took aim at testamentary bequests to religious associations, stating that any notary who redacted a will which contained a bequest to paupers, religious or ecclesiastical individuals or corporations or places, was required to make this bequest known to the *armaria* of the commune within a month of the testator's death. If he did not

¹³ Gatti argues that some medieval testaments functioned in this way. "Autonomia privata," 18.

¹⁴ Thomas Kuehn, *Law, Family and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991) 15.

do so, he would be fined 2 *soldi* for every *lire* of the bequest. The judge of the *podestà* was to inquire weekly (*omni ebdomada*) whether any such bequests had been reported.¹⁵ The statute does not indicate what was to become of these bequests, but given the Visconti's concerted attempts at collecting ever-larger revenues from their territories, it is most likely that they sought to tax the bequests, if not redirect them entirely to the civic coffers.¹⁶ The compilers of Bergamo's civic statutes recognized that such attempts to gain control of these bequests might be unpopular, since immediately after these two chapters, they established that any notary who attempted to conceal such wills from the authorities would be fined ten *lire*.¹⁷

The nature of the will as a public document was intrinsic to its definition, and so the location of its redaction did not affect its public quality. Wills could be created in intimate surroundings such as a bedroom, or on public streets in front of passersby. The choice of setting was dictated both by the physical state of the testator and by the notary's own requirements. Notaries, for example, often worked in churches and city streets more than in their own shops.¹⁸ But while the place where the will was created had no impact on its nature as a public document, it can tell us something about the relations between testators and their family members at the moment the will was drawn up. For example, on a November day in 1350, a newly-widowed woman stood outside the house of her late husband in the town of Zogno and dictated her will to the notary Petrus de Panizollis. The house, in which she had probably lived during her marriage and brought up her family, was no longer hers, since it was described as "the house belonging to the heirs" of her husband.

¹⁵ Giuliana Forgiarini, ed. *Lo Statuto di Bergamo del 1353* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1996) Collacio Primo, chapters LVII and LVIII, 63–64.

¹⁶ Patrizia Mainoni argues that in the mid-fourteenth century the Visconti stepped up their efforts to collect revenue from all of their subject cities. See Mainoni, *Economia e Politica nella Lombardia Medievale: da Bergamo a Milano fra XIII e XV secolo*, 96–99. Also see Mainoni, *Le Radici della Discordia: Ricerche sulla fiscalità a Bergamo tra XIII e XV secolo* (Edizioni Unicopoli, 1997) 85–86.

¹⁷ Forgiarini, *Lo Statuto di Bergamo del 1353*, Collacio Primo, chapter LVIII, 64.

¹⁸ Recent criticism of historians' creation of anachronistic boundaries between public and private in the Middle Ages applies here. See Felicity Riddy, "Looking Closely: Authority and Intimacy in the Late Medieval Urban Home" in Erler and Kowaleski, ed. *Gendering the Master Narrative*, 212–228 and Shannon McSheffrey, "Place, Space and Situation: Public and Private in the Making of Marriage in Late Medieval London."

The location in which she dictated the will reflected her newly-marginal status within her former household. The bequests in the will suggest that she was not happy with this arrangement. Her will did not acknowledge her husband's heirs, and instead her estate went to religious institutions, clerics, and her daughter, in the event of her marriage.¹⁹

The site of a will's creation can also tell us about the involvement of lay pious institutions in the creation of testaments. In Bergamo many testators went to the house of the MIA in the neighborhood of S. Eufemia to redact their testaments. Of the nearly 500 testaments dating from between 1265 and 1400 examined for this study, about 40 were redacted in the MIA's house. This compares to 23 wills redacted in the house of the Franciscans and nine in the Dominican church during the same period. There are several reasons for the high number of references to the MIA as a site for the redaction of wills. First, it is the result of the survival of records. For example, the registers of Gerardus Soyarius, the notary who worked for the MIA in this period, all survive, meaning that a large number of extant wills from the mid-fourteenth century were created by this notary. However, the preponderance of wills redacted in the MIA's house by the confraternity's notary, with MIA officials as witnesses, also suggests that the confraternity provided an essential service to lay people (especially during periods of crisis such as the plague) by providing them with the means to create a will efficiently. As well, those who redacted their wills at the MIA's house also usually made a bequest to the confraternity in the will, perhaps as payment to the company for their services.

The transformation of the testator's vernacular oral statements into a conventional set of notarized Latin instructions has caused some scholars to argue that the formulation of wills subsumed the testator's own wishes under a growing veil of notarial practice.²⁰ But textual analysis of individual wills suggests instead that testators' oral instructions also played a significant role in determining the shape as well as the content of the written document. An example of how wills resounded with the voices of testators is found in the 1365 testament of domina Garina, a member of two important Bergamasque

¹⁹ ASBg, Notarile, P. Panizollis, busta 45, 207.

²⁰ Armando Petrucci, "Il Testamento Come Documento," in *Nolens Intestatus Decedere*, 12.

families, the Suardi, her birth family, and the Colleoni, her family by marriage.²¹ Garina's voice echoes through both the form and the content of her will. After a formal introduction in which the notary Iohannes Parvis stated that this testament replaced all other previous testaments, the document began as all testaments did, by identifying Garina's "universal heir," who in this case was her daughter Brangina. The will then listed the other legacies Garina wanted to be distributed from her estate. She began with a large bequest of 100 *lire* for the Dominicans, asking them to celebrate a mass for her soul and that of her late husband every day *in perpetuum*. She followed this instruction by stating that she wished to be buried in the Dominican church of S. Stefano at the feet of her husband's tomb. The bequest for the Dominicans was mirrored by one of equal value for the nuns of S. Martha, instructing that they were only to use the money for repairs to their dormitory. The will then listed a number of religious that she wished to receive bequests. These included the Dominican friar Guillelmus Colleoni, who, she noted, was her brother (her husband's brother) and a nun from another monastery who was her sister. Further bequests for individual religious were followed by conventional legacies for repairs to churches inside and outside the city, and for the *Carcerati* confraternity.

Up to this point in the will it would be difficult to determine the extent to which Garina alone shaped these bequests. Certainly her references to family members indicates that she named those people herself, but otherwise the content of the will was conventional and could easily have been suggested almost completely by the notary. But the next part of the will reveals Garina's voice more clearly. After listing all of the religious bequests, Garina returned to her own death, and once again brought up the issue of her burial. The will repeats that she wanted to be buried in the *ecclesia nova* of S. Stefano, but this time the document describes her proposed burial site as "under the tomb of her son ?Plevorius." At this point the text expands on the ceremonies Garina wanted to take place at her funeral, asking members of the flagellant confraternity to carry her body to its burial site. Statements followed detailing the alms she wanted to be distributed at her *septima* ceremony. As the document raises the issue of burial twice and also introduces changes to Garina's plans for her

²¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Parvis, busta 22, 214–217.

funeral at this mid-point of the testament, we can assume that it echoed Garina's instructions to the notary, as she moved from one topic to another and reminded herself of forgotten details as she talked. The final structure of the will reflects the slightly rambling quality of oral instructions rather than the more tightly revised nature of a written document. This rambling structure suggests that in this case, and likely many others, too, the testator's own priorities took precedence over the notary's need to create a standardized document. This evidence thus indicates that wills were complex creations in which the testator's own voice was not completely silenced.

Testamentary bequests to confraternities

The voices of individual testators, which are made audible through an examination of the structure of their wills, can also be heard when we examine the variety of roles which testators created for confraternities as they fashioned bequests for those institutions. Such an examination reveals that both lay men and, with more effort, women were successful in shaping the lay pious institutions to meet their own pious and secular needs during the fourteenth century.²² These roles also serve as a reminder that testamentary bequests to pious associations reveal more than the spiritual culture of the testator. These bequests also underscore the extent to which pious and secular priorities were bound up with each other in the minds of lay men and women.

Many fourteenth-century testators established a particularly significant role for the MIA in the administration of their estates and the protection and regulation of their families. The form of the conditions which testators placed on their legacies to the MIA tells us much about their trust in the confraternity's administrative capacities. A straightforward condition involved a bequest which would devolve to a confraternity after the death of another person, who was granted the usufruct of the property during his or her lifetime. Both male

²² This situation paralleled that of other cities on the peninsula during the fourteenth century. James Banker notes for San Sepolcro that during that period, "testators or their notaries became more adept at securing value or labor from the confraternity [of Santa Maria della Notte] for their bequests." Banker, *Death in the Community*, 132.

and female testators employed this type of bequest. The conditional legacy meant that the interim heir could not sell or otherwise alienate the property, since it was ultimately destined for the confraternity. Such legacies therefore did double duty. First, they functioned as pious bequests to the confraternity and secondly they provided income for family members—usually women—who might otherwise have been left destitute after the testator's death. For example, in 1342 Detesalvus de Gatti dictated a will in which he declared the MIA heir to all his property. He asked the confraternity to give a piece of property in Borgo Canale to his mother, domina Raynetta, and some household goods to his wife, domina Alegrancia. Both women were to have the use of the property during their lives, and on their deaths it would devolve to the confraternity.²³ Similarly, Lanfrancus de Corlacapitis, a notary and wealthy Bergamasque citizen, left his estate to two confraternities under these conditions. He stated that his wife, domina Benvenuta, could have the use of all of his property during her life, but that after her death the estate was to be given to the poor by the MIA and to the confraternity of the town of Collino.²⁴

Further instances of the way in which testators shaped the MIA to suit their purposes but which also illustrate how the MIA was able to adapt to such requests was seen in requests to the MIA to provide protection for their heirs in the event of crisis. A dramatic example of such a request is found in the 1338 will of a widow called Flora, who directed a bequest to the MIA for the protection of her family members living in the county of Mediolago. She left a house and garden in Bergamo to the confraternity, and ordered that the MIA provide that property to any of her husband's relatives from that county so that if these members of her family were banished from the county or fell into "some disgrace," sanctuary would be available to them. In the meantime, the MIA was permitted to rent the property and collect the income for itself. However, Flora stated that confraternity officials were to make the property available to her family members at half the rate which they would demand from others.²⁵ Flora's bequest evoked a role for the MIA as a guarantor of security in times of political instability.

²³ BCBg, MIA perg. 4421.

²⁴ BCBg, MIA perg. 8646.

²⁵ BCBg, MIA perg. 587.

Flora was an unusual testatrix in that she did not mention any of her female relatives in her bequest. Most women making a bequest to the MIA customarily left the usufruct of property to a female heir before it devolved to the confraternity. Examples from both the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries demonstrate women's desire to ensure some financial security for their female relatives in this way. For instance, in 1277 a widow named domina Cantelda instructed the MIA to give her sister Alberga, who was either widowed or unmarried, all of Cantelda's property for her use during her life.²⁶ Again, two other female testators left their mothers usufruct of their property through the MIA. Domina Armelina, a widow who lived with her mother Henrica, left property to the MIA in 1332.²⁷ As a condition of the bequest, her mother was to have the use of the land during her life. After Henrica's death the bequest was to devolve to the MIA, and with it the confraternity was to make a donation to the confraternity of Scanzo for the poor of Scanzo and Rosciate.²⁸ Similarly, in 1338 domina Franzina, wife of Albertus Cavazzi, left most of her property to her husband, but bequeathed some land in Sporzatica to the MIA, first allowing her mother, domina Bona, to have the use of the land while she lived.²⁹ Much like the women in the city's hospitals described in chapter 2, these women turned to the MIA to provide their peers with security in a world in which unmarried or widowed women enjoyed little other protection.³⁰

Just as they created security for their heirs through bequests to the MIA, testators also shaped their bequests to the MIA to control the actions of their heirs from beyond the grave. For instance, some testators stated in their wills that if their heirs disobeyed the instructions for the use of property willed to them, the MIA would receive the bequest instead. Without regular inventories of the MIA's immovable property for the fourteenth century, it is impossible to know how many of these bequests the confraternity ultimately received.

²⁶ BCBg, MIA perg. 1237.

²⁷ The will was redacted in *domo habitacionis suprascriptarum dominarum Henrice et Armeline*. BCBg, MIA perg. 736.

²⁸ BCBg, MIA perg. 736.

²⁹ BCBg, MIA perg. 649.

³⁰ Elaine Rosenthal has noticed a similar pattern in Florentine women's wills. "The Position of Women in Renaissance Florence: Neither Autonomy nor Subjection," in *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein*, Peter Denley and Caroline Elam, eds. (London: Committee for Medieval Studies, Westfield College, 1988) 374.

However, perhaps aware of the possibility that heirs might cheat the confraternity of these bequests through their good behavior, testators wishing to ensure that the MIA received a bequest from them sometimes made a small unconditional bequest to the confraternity as well. In his 1350 will, Iacobus, called Caraya of Alme, declared that his brother Zambonus and his cousins Betinus, Bertulinus, and Iohannes would inherit all of his property. However, the will stipulated that if they attempted to sell that property within twenty-five years of Iacobus' death, then the bequest would devolve to the MIA. At the same time, Iacobus also made a separate bequest to the confraternity of a piece of land in the region of Lallio.³¹ Similarly, Fra Paulus de Colzate, a former MIA official, left two thirds of his estate to his son Gervasius, but stated that Gervasius could not sell any part of the estate without the agreement of MIA officials, and if he disobeyed, the confraternity would receive the entire estate. In a separate, unconditional legacy, Paulus left 25 *lire* to the MIA to be distributed to the poor.³²

The wills of male testators evince particular concern about the behavior and morals of their wives once they became widowed, since such behavior was essential to maintaining the honor of their household. They therefore turned to the MIA to act as a regulator of their widows' morals. To do so, these testators asked the confraternity to provide their widows with property and a regular annuity on condition that they remained chaste. For example, Albertus de Picollis, a former minister of the MIA, left his estate to the MIA in 1313 on the understanding that its officials would ensure that his widow, domina Frisa, received goods and income from the estate for the rest of her life. After his death in 1313 the minister and cellarers of the MIA gave domina Frisa a large number of household objects and comestibles, including a mattress, linen and lambswool bed coverings, table cloths and napkins, several bushels of chestnuts, an oil lamp, copper pots, and two chests, stating that these were hers "to keep and use rightly and legally" while she "lives and keeps the bed of Fra Albertus."³³ In all cases in which provisions were made for

³¹ The legacy to the confraternity included several more conditions. Iacobus wished the income from the property to go to the poor, but he was especially anxious that his own relatives be served before others. BCBg, MIA perg. 604.

³² BCBg, MIA perg. 11903.

³³ BCBg, MIA perg. 4777. For other examples of this type of request, see BCBg,

widows, testators only provided assistance to wives who did not remarry. In this way, their bequests to their widows through the MIA called on the confraternity to regulate the social status quo.

But male testators who left widows behind them were not the only ones to ask the confraternity to observe and control the behavior of their heirs. Other testators also made similar requests of the MIA to regulate the conduct of heirs, including children and friends, after their deaths. In asking for the confraternity's assistance in this regard, men and women alike demonstrated their trust in its administrative capacities, and, equally significantly, both groups reinforced the MIA's role as an agent of social control in the city. In 1348 *domina* Palasina, a widow, left her two sons 10 *lire* each in her will, but stated that if they did not "govern themselves well" the MIA was to receive the bequest. She left a further 40 *lire* for the MIA to be given to her sons at the discretion of the confraternity's officials. Her bequest underscores the argument that all testators, not only married men, used the MIA as social regulator.³⁴ Two years later, the testator Paulus de Lemen instructed the MIA to give a bequest of 120 *lire* to his daughter Zoanna on condition that she not live with her husband.³⁵ Similarly, in a codicil to her 1361 will, *domina* Castella Bonghi asked the minister of the MIA to keep watch over one Matholus de Mozzo, to whom she had left 25 *lire*. If he engaged in "vagabondage," she instructed the MIA, he was to lose his bequest and it would fall to the MIA.³⁶ In another notable attempt to control the behavior of heirs, a testatrix turned to the MIA apparently to ensure that a friend would not find herself trapped in a troubled marriage. In 1349, *domina* Richadona, widow of Pizettus Alcheri, dictated a will in which she left 7 *soma* of grain for a woman called Bertulina, the daughter of Bonellus Durentum and the wife of Piligrinus, son of the late Petrus della Porchera. Bertulina was only to receive this ample bequest, Richadona stated, if she continued to live "by herself chastely and honestly" and if her husband Piligrinus were to continue to live apart from her, as he had done for the past

MIA perg. 7693 (8 February, 1339); MIA perg. 571 (4 November, 1322); MIA perg. 650 (15 January, 1329); BCBg, MIA archivio 1942; ASBg, Notarile G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1334–35) 19 (4 February, 1335).

³⁴ ASBg, Notarile G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1346–48) 268–269.

³⁵ BCBg, MIA perg. 2998.

³⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 281–283.

four years. It is possible that Bertulina was living in Richadona's house, since the will also stated that Bertulina could live there, and if Piligrinus died, she could remain there and continue to collect the grain annually, as long as she remained "chaste and honest." Richadona's concern for her friend and heir extended to her friend's daughter, whom the testatrix left 10 *lire* with no conditions attached. However, in contrast to the strict conditions of chastity placed on similar bequests by male testators seeking to ensure that their wives remained loyal to their household, Richadona stated that if Bertulina chose to remarry, she would not lose the bequest entirely, but would receive two *soma* of grain annually rather than the original seven *soma*.³⁷ Women like Richadona were prepared to employ the MIA's role as social regulator to provide themselves and their friends with security.

Beyond testators' creation of a role for the MIA as a guarantor of their heirs' moral rectitude, the MIA also served the financial needs of testators. For instance, the confraternity sold property bequeathed to it on demand to individuals named by testators, at a price which the testator established in the will. The practice may have been an attempt by testators to avoid inheritance taxes or it might have been an attempt to establish a fixed price for commodities. It also may have ensured that part of the estate would benefit only certain members of their family. Bergaminus de Clusone, an official of the MIA, left one *soma* of grain and one *brenta* of wine yearly to the confraternity, and stipulated that his son Bertolomeus (or his heirs) was to be allowed to purchase the grain and the wine from the MIA, at a price of 22 and a half *lire* for the grain, and 20 *soldi* for the wine.³⁸ Another former official, Acursinus de Brembate, made the MIA his universal heir, but asked the confraternity to sell some property in the *vicinia* of S. Pancrazio on demand to his *socius*, Zeninus, son of the late Michele de Retallis, for 30 *lire*.³⁹ Finally, Lanfrancus de Lottis, a late thirteenth century testator, left 100 *lire* and his house to the MIA. He requested that his sister Alessandra be allowed to live in the house until her death. As a further condition of the bequest he ordered MIA officials to sell the house for

³⁷ ASBg, Notarile G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–50) 183–185.

³⁸ BCBg, MIA perg. 1182.

³⁹ He also made bequests to the poor of Brembate Sopra discussed in Chapter 3. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius busta 5 (1326–28) 251–254 and BCBg, MIA perg. 732.

60 *lire* to Venture Borelle de Lottis, presumably one of his relatives, if Venture wished to purchase it.⁴⁰ These legacies benefited the MIA because the confraternity was assured of receiving either the original property or its cash value.

Some testators turned to MIA officials to act as executors of their estates in order to protect favored relatives, perhaps because they distrusted their family members to administer bequests as the testator wished. A striking example of such a request occurred in 1335, when Magister Oprandus de Treviglio created a will leaving his estate to the MIA. As his universal heir, the confraternity was bound to distribute several bequests to his family members. First, Oprandus named his sister-in-law Cara, wife of his brother Martinus, the recipient of 25 *lire* and extended to her (and apparently not her husband) the right to live in his house in Borgo Canale for the rest of her life. After her death the house was to belong to the MIA.⁴¹ Second, Oprandus also left a small bequest of 20 *soldi* to Cara's servant Martina de Ferabobis. While he had left a large sum of money to Cara, he directed a much smaller bequest of 10 *lire* to Martinus. To his other brothers Alessandro and Guillelmus he left even less, giving them 20 *soldi* each. In addition, Oprandus directed the MIA to give several small amounts to various hospitals throughout the city, and he also left bequests to each of his four sisters, but made no mention of the existence of other family members.

Another testament reveals that Oprandus' already idiosyncratic will had omitted at least one person, his daughter Zoanna. In 1338, dominus Michele, son of the late Mayfredus Zezunonum, made a will in which he, too, left his estate to the MIA. Like other testators had done before him, Michele asked MIA officials to provide for his wife during her lifetime. However, in a codicil written the day after the will, Michele also asked the confraternity to provide food and other necessities to Zoanna, daughter of "the late Oprandus of Treviglio." He stipulated that Zoanna could live with his wife in his house, and that if his wife died before Zoanna the MIA should ensure that Oprandus' daughter retained a part of the house as her dwelling. As well, Michele made certain that Zoanna would be supported from the proceeds of his estate.⁴² Perhaps Zoanna had

⁴⁰ BCBg, MIA perg. 2992.

⁴¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 115–116.

⁴² BCBg, MIA perg. 740.

been living in Michele's house after the death of her father, and had nowhere else to go.

Testators sometimes asked the confraternity to care for their children or wards in the event of their deaths.⁴³ Examples of such requests can be found in mid-fourteenth century wills such as that from the testator Magister Lanfrancus, nicknamed Tayfonus, son of Magister Henricus de Blancho of Trescore, who asked the MIA to provide up to 40 *lire* or a dwelling-place in his house for his illegitimate son Iacobinus.⁴⁴ Bonomus de Bottanuco, a MIA official, also left a large annual bequest, including one *soma* of grain, ten bushels of millet, six bushels of rye, and a barrel or *plaustrum* of wine to the MIA to distribute during the lifetime of his sister, Anexia. He then asked her to give the grain and wine annually to "a certain orphan girl" who lived in Bonomus' house in borgo S. Stefano.⁴⁵

Bequests to the poor through the MIA became increasingly common in the fourteenth century. In Chapter 3 we saw that in the early decades of the century testators began to identify the paupers living in specific communities as recipients of *pro anima* bequests. Another popular bequest was that made to the testator's poor relatives. Domina Franzina, the widow of the official Lombardinus de Levate, asked that the MIA distribute 100 *lire* to the poor within the city and region, but she was careful to state that "poor relatives of the testatrix should be served before others."⁴⁶ Poor girls requiring dowries and pilgrims also received bequests from some testators. Domina Adeleyta, widow of dominus Sozzius de Bonifadis of Osio, asked the minister of the MIA to distribute 100 *lire* as dowries for poor girls and 25 *lire* to poor pilgrims traveling to Rome when a plenary indulgence was announced.⁴⁷ Finally, the nobleman Iohannes Rivola used political affiliations as another means of identifying paupers eligible to receive aid from his estate when, in his 1374 will, he instructed the MIA to give assistance only to *pauperes gelfos*.⁴⁸

⁴³ See the discussion of nurses provided for the illegitimate children of clerics in chapter 3.

⁴⁴ BCBg, MIA perg. 4293.

⁴⁵ BCBg, MIA perg. 3300.

⁴⁶ *Item voluit quod parentibus pauperibus ipsius testatrix debeant plus serviri quam aliis.* BCBg, MIA perg. 656.

⁴⁷ BCBg, MIA perg. 103.

⁴⁸ BCBg, MIA perg. 781.

Poor students were a further group identified by testators for bequests to be distributed by the MIA. These bequests broadened the influence of the MIA to the field of education, and eventually led to the foundation of a school run by the confraternity. In the 1337 testament of Laurentius de Apibus, the professor of grammar (and father of Venturino da Bergamo) who served the confraternity as an official in the 1330s, Laurentius stated that if his son Iacobus died without legitimate male heirs, then two parts of the inheritance were to go to the MIA. The confraternity was to distribute the remaining third of the estate “among the poor and especially [among] good deserving scholars who do not have enough to sustain them while they are studying[.]”⁴⁹ Laurentius’ bequest was increased by his son Iacobus in his 1362 will. That will provided the foundation for the school which the MIA established in the late fifteenth century.⁵⁰

Male testators were particularly concerned with repayments of any ill-gotten, or usurious gains (*male ablata* or *ablatorum*) they had amassed during their professional lives, and they turned to MIA officials to assist them in making these payments from their estates. In his 1335 will, the MIA’s minister Iohannes de Ulivenis requested that his executors, two MIA officials, repay any usurious profit he had made during his life.⁵¹ Similarly, Oprandus de Treviglio asked MIA officials to spend up to one fifth of the proceeds of his estate on the repayment of usurious profits and other ill-gotten gains which he or his father had collected.⁵² Bertramus de Casteneta stipulated that the MIA could spend 176 *lire* on restitution of his *male ablata*.⁵³ In the first of two extant versions of his testament, Iohannes de Lodi also asked the MIA to repay usury he had taken.⁵⁴ The MIA appears to have honored the testators’ requests, since several documents from expense records during the fourteenth century show confraternity officials giving small amounts of money to individuals identified as those who had lost their money to these testators.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ BCBg, MIA perg. 2966.

⁵⁰ G. Locatelli, “L’Istruzione in Bergamo e la Misericordia Maggiore,” 50–51.

⁵¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 5–6.

⁵² ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 115–116.

⁵³ BCBg, MIA perg. 1166.

⁵⁴ BCBg, MIA perg. 1942.

⁵⁵ For example, BCBg, MIA perg. 4468, 4471 and 4811. James Banker has noted that testators made similar requests of the confraternities of San Sepolcro. Banker, *Death in the Community*, 132.

The relationship between the MIA and female testators reflected the disconnection between the confraternity's construction of an increasingly-passive position for women within the company and some women's challenge to those expectations. For instance, female testators who had both their own property and control of income from family property destined for the confraternity found themselves in a complicated position with the confraternity at the end of their lives. The women frequently sought to diversify their bequests, providing relatives, friends, and the confraternity with legacies even as they provided the confraternity what it was due. In order to carry out all of their testamentary wishes, testatrices had to negotiate with the confraternity much more than their male relatives did.

For instance, domina Laurencia, the wife of the wealthy and well-known citizen Iohannes de Lodi, was a member of the MIA in the mid-fourteenth century, along with her husband and daughter. Near the end of their lives both Iohannes and Laurencia sought the assistance of the confraternity in administering their estates. The difference in the confraternity's response to their requests reveals the extent to which the associations were focussed primarily on supporting their male members. Despite this, Laurencia's response to the difficulties that ensued between her and the MIA suggest that not all women accepted their more marginal status in the MIA. Ultimately, she was able to persuade MIA officials to assist her in organizing her testamentary bequests to suit her specific needs.

Iohannes sought and found protection and security for himself and his family from the MIA several times during his life. Laurencia's experiences with the MIA were less straightforward. The comparison of how the MIA responded to his will, made during Iohannes's marriage to Laurencia, with how the company responded to Laurencia's will, made when she was a widow, illustrates clearly the different economic and social realities men and women experienced and their different treatment by the confraternity. Iohannes had become a member of the MIA before his marriage to Laurencia, who was his second (or possibly third) wife.⁵⁶ In the winter of 1317, after a period of political exile from Bergamo, Iohannes returned to the city and

⁵⁶ On Iohannes' life and household in 1316–1317, see the depositions of several witnesses (dated 1317) swearing that Iohannes was now an inhabitant of the *vicinia* of S. Eufemia. These were given before the communal court in 1317 and include details of Iohannes' sojourn outside the city. BCBg, MIA archivio 1945.

moved into a house belonging to the MIA, and at this point established a close relationship with the confraternity.⁵⁷ In July of 1320, he promised to leave many of his goods to the MIA.⁵⁸ Sometime in the early 1320s, his wife Salvina died and he married Laurencia, a widow with a daughter.⁵⁹ In his 1327 will, Iohannes kept his earlier promise to the MIA, naming the confraternity heir to his estate. He died a month later.⁶⁰ His legacies to the MIA as well as their response to them provide us with a window on the way confraternities tailored themselves to suit the needs of the male citizens of Bergamo who left them substantial estates to manage.

Iohannes left his estate to the MIA on two conditions: first, that the confraternity distribute his pious bequests and secondly, that it ensure Laurencia's security after his death. The MIA met both needs readily. Iohannes bequeathed his property to the MIA, but he granted Laurencia usufruct of his land and other possessions during her lifetime. As a result, she had access to all the "vessels, beds, linen and wool cloths, belts and rings, furnishings and utensils" in their house providing that she remained chaste and did not remarry. Iohannes also allowed Laurencia to collect the income and produce from property he held outside Bergamo, but after her death all of this property was to devolve to the MIA, which would distribute the income from the property to paupers in the city and suburbs of Bergamo in part as recompense for usurious transactions he had been involved in during his life.⁶¹ The nature of this bequest thus ensured not only Laurencia's physical security but also Iohannes's spiritual needs.

⁵⁷ Iohannes also became a member of the *Carcerati* in 1325. BCBg, AB 72, 9r.

⁵⁸ BCBg, MIA archivio 730.

⁵⁹ Laurencia was widowed during the 1310s, and after her husband's death, penniless, she moved into her brother-in-law's house. In 1316 she went before the *podestà* to ask that she be exempted from paying taxes, since she had no income or property of her own. Her proctor before the court was the brother-in-law she now lived with. He told the judge that Laurencia was not the head of her household, but instead a member of his. He also noted that she held "no patrimonial property." As a result, Laurencia's name was stricken from the *liber exstimi*, the tax register kept by the cellarer of the commune. BCBg, MIA perg. 4240.

⁶⁰ For the will, see BCBg, MIA perg. 1249. A document dated December 11, 1327 shows MIA officials accepting the inheritance Iohannes had left them. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 5 (1326–28) 110. For an earlier version of his will see BCBg, MIA perg. 1942.

⁶¹ On at least two occasions after Iohannes's death the MIA made payments in Iohannes' name for usurious profits he had made. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 6 (1326–30) 119 and 124.

Iohannes also guaranteed his wife's legal protection after his death by obliging MIA officials to act at their expense as her legal representatives in any court case which concerned her rights to his property.⁶²

Laurencia's experience within the MIA was distinct from Iohannes's in that she was a silent member of the association during most of her life. She became a member of the MIA while she was married to Iohannes.⁶³ However, apart from the appearance of her name in the matriculation list, there are no other records of her connection with the MIA during her marriage. After Iohannes died, when she was probably in her mid-forties, she became involved in business activities which made her better-known in the community than she had been previously. She bought, sold, and rented several properties during the period between 1327 and her own death in 1342, using income from Iohannes's estate to purchase land both inside and outside Bergamo.⁶⁴ Then, nearing the end of her life, Laurencia created a testament in which, just as her husband had done, she sought the confraternity's protection for herself and her heirs. Unlike her husband, however, she had to use ingenuity to achieve the same results from the MIA that he had obtained without dissension.

Laurencia's method of amassing an estate of her own underscored her notable business acumen. But even though her unusual initiative set her apart from most of her male and female contemporaries, her status within the MIA was unchanged and similar to that of other women whose husbands had left their estates to the confraternity but the usufruct to them. She was in temporary control of

⁶² The MIA fulfilled its obligations to Laurencia after Iohannes' death. By the early 1330s, the confraternity had begun representing Laurencia in her legal battles with the Pellabrochis clan, who claimed some of the property Iohannes had left her. In 1332, the company's minister, Iohannes de Ulivenis, went to court over the issue and obtained a decision in Laurencia's favor. BCBg, MIA perg. 7744.

⁶³ In the matriculation list she is identified as the wife of dominus Iohannes de Lodi. BCBg, MIA archivio 938, 11r.

⁶⁴ In 1329 and 1331, she acquired two pieces of land in the village of Albino, renting one of these properties to the son of a local blacksmith. In 1336, she bought another piece of land in Albino, purchasing it for 22 *lire*, and then renting the land back to the seller for twelve years for five bushels of grain annually. Laurencia also bought land and rented property within the walls of Bergamo. In 1329 she rented a house and an oven in the vicinia of Arena for 6 *lire* per year. In 1334, she bought land, including a house, in Borgo Canale from her brother and her nephew. She paid 40 *lire* for the property, probably the largest purchase she made during this period. She then rented the house for 9 *lire* annually. For all of these transactions, see BCBg, MIA perg. 4239–4245.

Iohannes's land, but that property—although not the land she had bought herself—was to devolve to the confraternity on her death. She therefore had to make certain that that property was transferred not to her heirs, but to the MIA. The terms of her will reveal that Laurencia's primary concern was to protect her closest family members, not to assure the confraternity of its inheritance. The first version of her will, drawn up in 1342, was similar to her husband's testament. In it, she requested that the MIA protect her family in this world and also her soul in the next, making the MIA her universal heir, in other words, allowing it the remainder of her estate once all other bequests had been distributed. The terms of her will indicated that she, like her husband, perceived the MIA to be a useful tool for guaranteeing the security of her family after her death. For instance, she asked that confraternity officials ensure that her daughter Floramonte receive half of her land and possessions in two villages, Albino and Treviglio, as a supplement to the dowry that Laurencia had already supplied to her daughter several years before.⁶⁵ After she had provided for her daughter, Laurencia also established bequests for other members of her family. She left her grandson Zoaninus, son of Floramonte's first husband, a stipend of 12 *lire* annually until he reached the age of 18, although she cautioned that if Zoaninus lived with any of the members of his father's family he was not entitled to collect the legacy.⁶⁶ She also asked the MIA to provide income from three pieces of property which Laurencia controlled within the walls of Bergamo for her nephews Filippinus and Zoaninus. As was the custom of many women, Laurencia provided extensively for her other female relatives. She granted her niece Cusina 85 *lire* as a dowry. She left another niece, Anexia, some cash and household furniture, and a third niece, Margarita, money to buy a dress, as well as some household objects and clothing. Finally, she made numerous pious bequests to the MIA and other confraternities, religious orders, and local clerics.

Although Laurencia's will was conventional, it was complex as well due to the nature of her estate. As we have already noted, it not only included property from her late husband's estate but also

⁶⁵ For the entire text of the will, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1342–43) 116–118.

⁶⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1342–43) 116.

additional possessions that she herself had acquired during her widowhood. As a result, part of it was to devolve to the MIA on her death. However, Laurencia made no statement to this effect in her will, and the evidence we have suggests that the MIA became concerned that it might not receive its promised inheritance when she died. Two months after her original will was prepared, she remade her will at the request of the notary Gerardus Soyarius, himself a MIA member and official. In a new codicil requested by Gerardus in the name (*nomine et vice*) of the MIA she acknowledged the legal constraints of her situation. She declared that all of the moveable property in her house in Bergamo and in the buildings Iohannes had owned in Villa Ripe de Serio had been left her by Iohannes and thus was rightfully the MIA's on her death. She also altered the form of some of her bequests. Most notably, the original grant of a piece of property to her daughter became a cash gift of 300 *lire* which Laurencia instructed Floramonte to use to buy land. The land was intended to supply her with an income during her life. The property was to be transferred to the MIA on Floramonte's death.⁶⁷

Although Laurencia was forced to remake her will in response to the MIA's concern about receiving its promised property, she was also able to find a way to assert her own priorities in her will. In order to finance the bequests named in the codicil, she sold the MIA all of the land that she had bought after Iohannes's death.⁶⁸ From the sale, she received 1200 *lire*, a substantial payment which enabled her to make the 300 *lire* bequest to her daughter and still bequeath the other legacies she had originally set out in her testament. This was probably Laurencia's final act of business. She died about a month later, and her daughter Floramonte accepted her mother's bequest from the cellarer of the MIA.⁶⁹

While Laurencia and Iohannes each controlled substantial estates by the end of their lives, Laurencia, and not her husband, was forced to negotiate with the confraternity to ensure that her heirs received her bequests. Since Iohannes owned all of his property outright, there was no conflict about his testamentary wishes, while the confraternity's response to Laurencia's will was in keeping with the multifaceted nature of her status as both a *usufructuaria* and a property-holder

⁶⁷ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1342–43) 120.

⁶⁸ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1342–43) 121–122.

⁶⁹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1342–43) 169.

in her own right. But the fact remains that women, not men, tended to be granted the usufruct of property in testamentary legacies, and so few, if any, men would have found themselves in Laurencia's position. The MIA's different responses to Iohannes and Laurencia's wills thus reflect the way in which women's social positions in late medieval civic life also determined their relationship with confraternities. But the actions of women like Laurencia demonstrate that some women worked around these constraints in order to create the wills they wanted.

In contrast with the complex demands they placed on the MIA, testators left relatively small amounts of cash and property to other confraternities in the city. The disparity in these bequests might suggest that these associations occupied a relatively minor role on the civic stage, but they also could reflect the differences in the organization of the associations. Not every confraternity was equipped to administer bequests of land, and not all confraternities sought to become property-holders or administrators. Some, especially flagellant confraternities, did not encourage testators to leave property to them.⁷⁰

Bequests to smaller confraternities normally included small amounts of cash or simple property bequests with few conditions attached to them. Parish-based confraternities received bequests ranging from a few *soldi* (10 or 20 *soldi* was the most common amount named) to several *lire* or even, on rarer occasions, pieces of land from some testators. Larger bequests to parish confraternities almost never reached the same levels as those given to the MIA. For instance, in 1334 Bertramus, called Ugulinus de Cavalerio, left 15 *lire* to the confraternities of S. Leonardo and S. Alessandro in Colonna and a share of a piece of land to S. Alessandro. While these legacies were generous compared to the smaller bequests of a few *soldi* which the confraternities often received, they were small compared to the legacy of 50 *lire* which he left to the MIA in the same testament.⁷¹

In only a few cases did bequests to the parish confraternities of S. Alessandro della Croce, S. Caterina, S. Alessandro in Colonna, or to other confraternities, such as the *Carcerati* reveal anything about the institutional life of these organizations, or about attitudes of testators towards them. From 1315 onwards testators tended to leave

⁷⁰ Banker, *Death in the Community*, 183.

⁷¹ S. Alessandro in Colonna Parish Archive, uncatalogued volume, 4v–8r.

bequests of the same amount to two confraternities, those of the parishes of S. Leonardo and S. Alessandro in Colonna, allowing us to trace the gradual unification of the companies.⁷² But overall, bequests to these small confraternities, much more than those directed to the MIA, appear to have been made with the suggestion of a notary or confessor, since they were normally for identical amounts of money and rarely included any specific conditions created by the testator or testatrix. This fact is revealing in itself, since it indicates that the MIA had seized testators' imaginations in a way that other confraternities, more limited in geographical scope, resources or membership, had not.

While they differentiated between the types of bequests they made to large and small confraternities, both male and female testators turned to many different confraternities to satisfy their post-mortem spiritual needs. For instance, they sometimes asked that members of *disciplinati* companies play a role in their burial ceremonies by carrying their bodies to their burial sites. In this way they provided their funerals with an appropriately penitential character.⁷³ Only in a few instances did testators ask MIA members to pray for them. The notary Gerardus Soyarius asked members of the MIA to remember him while they said their prayers at meetings of the confraternity, but this was an unusual request.⁷⁴ More frequently testators asked confraternities to organize and pay for the celebration of masses for their souls.⁷⁵

Both confraternities and family members arranged for the *septima*, *tregentesimo*, and *noale*, anniversaries following the week, month, and year of a death.⁷⁶ Throughout Europe during the fourteenth and

⁷² In December, 1315, Biliolus, son of the late Petrus de Panizzoli de Zogno, left 5 *soldi* each for the confraternities of S. Leonardo and S. Alessandro in Colonna. BCBg, MIA perg. 1246.

⁷³ For examples, see BCBg, MIA perg. 666 and ASBg, Notarile, G. Parvis, busta 22 (1365) 214–217.

⁷⁴ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 11 (1352–54) 432–434.

⁷⁵ See the case of Petrus Zuchelle, who in 1360 asked the MIA and two other confraternities (S. Alessandro in Colonna and S. Leonardo) to organize and pay for 24 masses a year for his soul. Parish Archive of S. Alessandro in Colonna, uncatalogued volume, 13v–15v. For a 1361 request for masses organized by the MIA and S. Alessandro in Colonna, see BCBg, MIA perg. 767. For requests for masses from the MIA alone, see, among others, BCBg, MIA perg. 779; ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1340–41) 186–87; Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1341–42) 9–11; Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1343) 124–125.

⁷⁶ For examples of requests by women to the MIA for the organization of *sep-*

fifteenth centuries, these anniversary or commemorative masses became increasingly popular. In many places, the provision of such services was the main role of a confraternity.⁷⁷ In Bergamo, testators asked either confraternities or their family members to organize their services. In this way, testators acknowledged the role of confraternity members as their social kin at the end of their lives.⁷⁸

Expenses for these services were usually among the largest payments mentioned in a will. For example, in 1339, the testatrix domina Iacoba de Ambronibus, an infirm resident of the hospital of S. Caterina, made a will in which she left 5 *lire* for the hospital in which she lived, but 10 *lire* for her *septima* and 15 *lire* for her *tregentismo* and *noale*, the largest payments mentioned in this will.⁷⁹ Payments made for these services were usually larger than those for burials, too. Domina Caracossa, the wife of Magister Laurentius de Clusone, asked in 1347 that 5 *lire* be spent on her burial, but she left 20 *lire* for her *septima*.⁸⁰ Most testators asked that money for these services be spent on bread (*pancocto*), salt, and wine and other food for those in attendance. Usually the services took place in a local church, but in some cases they might have occurred in the testator's home. In 1370, Venture, called Tarollo of Zogno, made a will in which he asked that his *septima* take place at the Franciscan church, where each pauper in attendance would receive two *denari*, but at the same time, at his house his heirs were to give out four bushels of grain made into bread and two bushels of beans "well cooked," suggesting that a similar ceremony was taking place there.⁸¹

In conclusion, we have seen that the MIA became the confraternity in Bergamo of which testators made the widest variety of requests, as it protected their estates, provided spiritual services, and scrutinized the behavior of their heirs. Other confraternities either provided charity for the poor in the name of the testator, or served as spiritual supports at their funerals. The range of requests made of

tima services, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 6 (1330–34) 378 and 121–122; busta 7 (1334–35) 77–79; busta 8 (1341–42) 9–11.

⁷⁷ On the popularity of these services and their content in Florence, see Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 163–168.

⁷⁸ On the argument that these services cemented ties of social kinship within confraternities, see Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 166–167.

⁷⁹ BCBg, MIA perg. 1175.

⁸⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Parvis, busta 20 (1346–47) 157–159.

⁸¹ BCBg, MIA perg. 1197.

confraternities in these wills ultimately demonstrates both lay men's and women's belief that they could rely on religious institutions to meet a variety of pious and social needs at the end of their lives.

Testamentary bequests to churches and the clergy

Like bequests to confraternities, bequests to local churches and clergy in men's and women's wills also reflected testators' creation of roles for these institutions in their lives. Here, too, gender roles shaped the behavior of testators. Women, in particular, were creative in their use of the relatively limited resources at their disposal to establish close ties with their local churches and clerics.

The parish has often been described as a significant site for women's religious activities in the Middle Ages. In northern Europe, where parish structures developed earlier than they did in Italy, parishes provided lay women with a forum for their religious activities. In England, some women created all-female collectives within the parish church through their participation in rituals such as churching and with their donations of money to the parish during Hocktide. In some cases, women occupied positions of leadership in English parish churches, and one scholar has claimed that "as the parish assumed a greater role in local society, women's functions within the parish grew commensurately."⁸² Others suggest that the freedom women found within parish churches was acceptable to all since the churches functioned as extensions of domestic space, and were therefore acceptable realms for women's action.⁸³ Although women in Bergamo did not hold office within the institutions of the parish, wills give evidence that parish churches and female religious houses both provided space for women's devotional commitments.

⁸² Katherine French, "To Free them from Binding: Women in the Late Medieval English Parish," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 27(3) (1997) 394–95. But also see the qualifications of this argument in her more recent work, in which she states that "women's participation in the parish both reinforced traditional gender roles and challenged women's secondary status." French, "Women in the Late Medieval English Parish," in Erlar and Kowaleski, ed, *Gendering the Master Narrative*, 157. Others question the extent to which women could hold offices within the English parish structure. See Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England*, 33–39.

⁸³ Dennis Romano, "Gender and the Urban Geography of Renaissance Venice," *Journal of Social History* 23 (1989) 344.

Women's testamentary bequests to churches illustrate their connections to those institutions. For instance, a household inventory describing the devotional objects in one woman's house, as well as her testamentary instructions for their disposal, sheds light on her connection with several churches in the community. Domina Franzina de Levate, a member of the MIA and wife of a MIA official in the mid-fourteenth century, lived close to two significant pious sites in Bergamo, the parish church of S. Andrea and the female Dominican monastery of Mater Domini. Mater Domini was especially close, located beside her house in the *vicinia* of S. Andrea. Her connections to both churches are evident in the earliest versions of her will, dated 1346 and 1349. In these texts, Franzina made bequests of domestic objects to the two churches, asking that these objects be used for sacred purposes. Through her bequests, she transformed these domestic objects, giving them a function within the sacred realm, and so articulating her own connection to sacred space. For instance, she left a "painted" *scripnum*, or trunk, to the nuns of Mater Domini for use in the sacristy of their church, presumably to store sacred items. She also stated that some benches in her house might be useful to worshippers in the Dominican church.⁸⁴ She left her parish church, S. Andrea, a large wine-barrel "for keeping the sacrificial wine." But one of the most striking bequests Franzina made in her will was the promise of one of her silk skirts to the parish church, so that that it might be made into an altar-cloth (*frontale*).⁸⁵

Other female contemporaries of Franzina, "dying Marthas," as Robert Brentano calls them, also furnished religious institutions with devotional or liturgical objects, often taken from their own clothing or domestic goods.⁸⁶ In 1313, domina Bona, a niece of the Bergamasque cardinal Guglielmo dei Longhi, left a velvet dress to the church of the monastery of S. Nicolo in Plorzano to be made into a *paramentum* or sacerdotal robe. She also asked that her silver belts be melted down or sold and turned into a chalice for the Franciscan

⁸⁴ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10, (1349–1350) 166.

⁸⁵ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–1350) 167. The literature on women's bequests of clothing and textiles to their churches has grown in recent years. For England, see Katherine French, "I Leave My Best Gown as a Vestment: Women's Spiritual Interests in the Late Medieval Parish," *Magistra* 4 (1998) and Peters, *Patterns of Piety*, 49–53.

⁸⁶ Robert Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon*, 285.

church.⁸⁷ Another woman, domina Richadona of Cerete, bequeathed a quilt or coverlet (*cultra*) and a pair of sheets to the parish church of S. Caterina “to be placed on the bier of the church on the bodies of the dead during the service.”⁸⁸ Still other women adopted the custom of making donations of their household textiles to be used as altar cloths. In 1350, domina Richadona, the widow of a MIA official, Guillelmus dei Alcheris, left sheets and a coverlet “to decorate the altar of S. Francesco” in the Franciscan church.⁸⁹ In 1396, a widow named domina Genzina left the church of S. Pietro in Scanzo a cloth or *toallia* for the altar, stating that it should cover the altar when the mass was celebrated.⁹⁰

Women’s interest in bequeathing their clothing and cloths to churches suggests that they were interested in leaving what one scholar has called “their aesthetic and spiritual imprint on their parish.”⁹¹ In Robert Brentano’s view, “their domestic, dying world remembers a Christ, who might walk in the door, come to dinner (or be a beggar like Lazarus outside), a Christ who could have known their tablecloths even before they were turned, as so many of them were, into altar cloths.”⁹² But testatrices in Bergamo were also drawn to clothing bequests for pragmatic reasons. Since they normally owned clothing and domestic textiles outright, these were among the objects that appeared most frequently in their wills. Martha Howell notes that bequests of this kind displayed women’s ability to attain their own goals within a system that threatened to “restrict [their] control over marital property.”⁹³ It is certainly the case that women did not always intend their clothes and domestic textiles to play a role in religious services, but instead saw them as effects to be sold to raise money for the church or clerics. Even women from wealthy families employed this strategy in their wills. For instance, in 1371, domina Claradea, a widow from the Colleoni family, left a coat (*cotardita*) to the priest of S. Salvatore and asked that the proceeds from its sale be used to repair the chalice in the church.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ BCBg, AB 385, 97r.

⁸⁸ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1331–32) 77–78.

⁸⁹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 11 (1350–52), 184.

⁹⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Fanconi, busta 118, 121–124.

⁹¹ See French, “I Leave My Best Gown as a Vestment,” 58 and 70.

⁹² Brentano, *Rome before Avignon*, 285.

⁹³ Martha Howell, “Fixing Movables: Gifts by Testament in Late Medieval Douai,” *Past and Present* 150 (1996) 28 and 37.

⁹⁴ BCBg, MIA perg. 779.

Although women's donations of clothing to churches and the clergy were motivated by pragmatic issues, it is also the case that women, more than men, made bequests of cash to purchase sacramental garments for the clergy, suggesting that these bequests also originated in a specifically female religious culture. The widow domina Martina dei Aijardi instructed her son in 1335 to buy a "new chasuble" and give it to the priest at the church of S. Bartolomeo in Rasulo; the priest would wear the garment when he celebrated "the holy office for the soul of domina Martina."⁹⁵ Ten years later, domina Flurina of Zogno left the parish church of S. Lorenzo 10 *lire* to buy a *paramentum*. She also left a *toallia* for the altar of the church.⁹⁶ In 1336, domina Benvenuta, widow of domino Guillelmus dei Garganis, left 30 *lire* to be spent partly on a *paramentum* for the Franciscan church.⁹⁷ She repeated the bequest in a subsequent redaction of her will, emphasizing that the robe should be "beautiful" (*pulcro*).⁹⁸

The adornment of churches with clothing and textiles was an interest of poor and wealthy women alike. Aside from their bequests of clothing to churches, women also used their testamentary bequests to provide for images to be painted or sculpted in church interiors. So Domina Bona, the testatrix who asked for her silver belts to be turned into a chalice, told her executors that any money left over from that bequest should be used for "pictures" for the Franciscan church. She left a separate bequest for a *simalcum* of the Virgin for the same church.⁹⁹ Her contemporary domina Benvenuta, widow of Guillelmus de Garganis, left 100 *soldi* and instructions for pictures of five saints, the "Virgin with her son," Francis, "Beato Giorgio" and "Beata Katarina" to be painted either in the church of S. Maria Maggiore or in the Franciscan church.¹⁰⁰ Domina Delasalva, widow of dominus Conradus de Tiraboschis, asked that 40 *soldi* be spent to paint the figures of Mary, the angel Gabriel, and St John the Evangelist on the tomb of her husband (possibly in the church of S. Maria Maggiore), but only if she was buried there.¹⁰¹ By adding

⁹⁵ S. Alessandro in Colonna Parish Archive, uncatalogued volume, 8r.

⁹⁶ ASBg, Notarile, P. Panizolis, busta 45 (1348–49) 435–436.

⁹⁷ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 7 (1335–36) 363–4.

⁹⁸ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1336–1340) 166.

⁹⁹ BCBg, AB 385, 97r.

¹⁰⁰ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1347–48) 104–105.

¹⁰¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 8 (1336–1340) 47.

such images to their churches, these women altered the devotional landscape and preserved the community's memory of them.

But while women's interest in the decoration of churches might seem to originate in a specifically "feminine" piety, church decoration was not an exclusively female concern. Men, both clerics and lay, made bequests for the decoration of churches too. Acursinus de Brembate, whose donations of alms to the poor were part of the discussion of Chapter 3, also left money for a cloth with a cross painted on it large enough to be placed on the bodies of those buried in the church of Brembate Sopra.¹⁰² In his 1361 will, Lazzarinus de Zogno promised 2 florins for the purchase of *unam planetam* for the celebration of the mass.¹⁰³ Men had altars built in local churches as well. In 1362, the nobleman Simone de la Crotta asked his heirs to build an altar in "a church" where prayers could be said for his soul.¹⁰⁴ Men also took an interest in the renovation of churches. In 1361, Iohannes Sgorbie left 25 *lire* to the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna for the rebuilding of the walls around its cemetery and sacristy.¹⁰⁵ Male testators also left money for the construction of tombs for themselves and their family members. In 1361, Iacobus de Apibus, the brother of Venturino da Bergamo and son of Laurentius de Apibus, redacted a will in which he asked that money from his estate be used to build *unam archam* (a tomb) in the Dominican church of S. Stefano. In his description of the tomb, he noted that he wanted it to resemble that constructed in honor of domina Brangina, most likely the daughter of Garina Colleoni.¹⁰⁶

Many of the men who left bequests to furnish churches were clerics. For instance, Pre Algisius, archpriest of the *pieve* of S. Giovanni de Telgate in the 1340s, left one of his robes (*unum paramentum*) and a breviary to the church of S. Maria Maggiore in Bergamo.¹⁰⁷ Unlike lay women, whose bequests of objects to be used for church decoration rarely stipulated the location of those objects within church buildings, clerics sometimes gave specific instructions about the placement and use of the items they left to their churches. In 1305 Pre

¹⁰² BCBg, MIA perg. 732 and 4111.

¹⁰³ BCBg, MIA perg. 765.

¹⁰⁴ BCBg, MIA perg. 1196.

¹⁰⁵ BCBg, MIA perg. 767.

¹⁰⁶ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 184–192.

¹⁰⁷ BCBg, MIA perg. 750.

Bonazius de Osio, a canon of the cathedral of S. Vincenzo, left 25 *lire* in his will for the erection of a pulpit in the cathedral, asking also that the money be used to build an altar above the pulpit “to the honor of Blessed Matthew.” The pulpit, he added somewhat unnecessarily, could be used for reading sacred texts and preaching. Furthermore, the canon asked that his bequest be placed on the left of the entrance of the cathedral, “like the pulpit in the church of S. Alessandro Maggiore,” the cathedral located just outside the city walls.¹⁰⁸ These examples serve as a reminder that we should not essentialize religious beliefs. The articulation of belief could transcend gender or social status. Thus, women’s bequests of clothing and other objects to their churches were not necessarily an expression of their essential “Martha-like” qualities, but rather their resourceful use of materials easily at their disposal in a conventional, acceptable way.

Given the pious intentions that lay behind the creation of wills, it is reasonable to assume that they would reveal much information about how people worshipped. But this is not necessarily the case. For example, bequests to parish churches or clerics suggest that testators had thought of these institutions and people as the focus of their devotional lives. Yet only rarely did testators in Bergamo identify their confessor (*penetenciario*), surely one of the most significant religious figures in their lives, in their wills.¹⁰⁹ In the case of domina Franzina de Levate, however, the survival of two versions of her will and an inventory of her household goods sheds light on her commitment to the sites where she worshipped during her life. These records, when read together, show how she found religious satisfaction not only within her parish church but also within the Dominican house of Mater Domini during her life.¹¹⁰ Franzina’s testamentary bequests reveal that Mater Domini served her as a site for worship throughout her widowhood. For example, in her 1346 will, she

¹⁰⁸ BCBg, MIA perg. 1159.

¹⁰⁹ Such as domina Palasina, a widow from the deGoldeis clan, who left her confessor 40 *soldi* in her 1348 will. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1346–48) 268–269. Also see the same amount left to a Franciscan friar, the confessor of Lanzinus de Bubobis, in 1361. ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 181–184 and a second version on 259–262.

¹¹⁰ On the early history of Mater Domini see Gloria Caminiti, “La controversia tra S Maria Matris Domini, S Giorgio di Redona, e S Maria di Torre Boldone: un’occasione di confronto tra diverse realtà religiose nella Bergamo di fine Trecento,” *Studi di storia medioevale e di diplomatica* 15 (1995) 43–74.

bequeathed her *oratorium*, a prayer hassock, to one of the nuns of the Dominican house. In the text of the will, Franzina noted that the hassock was kept *in ecclesia*, probably, given the identity of the recipient, in the church of Mater Domini.¹¹¹ She also bequeathed two *assida*, or reliquaries, to a nun of Mater Domini and to Frixina, a woman sharing her house. These objects also appear to have been located in the Dominican church, since they were not mentioned in the inventory of objects in Franzina's house which the MIA drew up immediately after her death. Thus, the church of Mater Domini was likely Franzina's primary place of worship in Bergamo.

Other details from Franzina's testaments concerning her relations with the Dominican nuns further indicate the closeness of her connection to Mater Domini. In both versions of her will, she left bequests for individual members of the religious house. In 1346, she stated simply that each nun in the monastery should receive 2 *soldi* from her estate.¹¹² By 1349, she had become more familiar with the institution, and in a new version of her will redacted that year, she named each of the nuns that she wanted to receive these bequests, leaving different amounts to each woman, ranging from 2 to 20 *soldi* for every member of the house.¹¹³ Her bequests indicate that the female Dominican religious house provided Franzina with a space in which to worship. The fact that she found religious satisfaction within a monastery also reinforces the argument that for women in the mid-fourteenth century, enclosure and contemplation were pious ideals.

¹¹¹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–1350) 167. For the 1346 redaction of her will see BCBg, MIA perg. 656.

¹¹² BCBg, MIA perg. 656.

¹¹³ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1349–1350) 165. A further connection between Franzina and the female Dominicans is seen in her bequests to a widow, Maria, and her children, Frixina and Franzi (perhaps named after Franzina) who lived with Franzina in the last years of her life. Franzina's bequest to Frixina came with conditions attached. If Frixina entered Mater Domini, she would receive 50 gold florins from Franzina's estate, along with a bed and household objects. As well, the MIA would spend 20 *lire* on wax candles "to do her honor" on her entry into the monastery. If she did not enter the monastery, she would receive the lesser sum of 50 *lire*. Similarly, Franzina asked that the MIA take responsibility for Maria's son Franzi, and she hoped that the confraternity would encourage the boy to enter the Dominican Order eventually.

Wills and Plague in Bergamo

Throughout this chapter, I have noted the distinct qualities of wills made by men and, especially, women. However, I have also noted that in certain cases, male and female testators were united by sets of shared concerns, for instance in the way they created a variety of roles for the MIA in their wills. A similar unity of purpose among male and female testators was visible during the onset of plague in Bergamo in the early 1360s. Overall, wills redacted in Bergamo during plague months reveal the desire of both men and women to confront and control the effects of the disease on the community. Contrary to conventional descriptions of social breakdown in the wake of the plague—portrayals that take too literally Giovanni Boccaccio's account of the disintegration of communities and the family during the epidemic in Florence—wills from Bergamo reveal the extent to which social networks during the plague years remained as strong as they had been as in pre-plague times. This solidarity was most evident in the way in which many testators looked beyond their immediate family members to identify a wider group of heirs than they had before the onset of the epidemic.

The plague of 1347–48, which so devastated much of Western Europe, made little impact on Bergamo. There are no references in any sources of plague affecting the city during that period, and the summer of 1348, the period of highest mortality in other parts of the peninsula, did not see a notable increase in wills by Bergamasque testators.¹¹⁴ Between June and October of that year the MIA's notary Gerardus Soyarius redacted only ten wills, actually one less than the number from the same period the year before.¹¹⁵ None of the 1348 testators appeared to be ill. But while Bergamo may have been spared from the plague in 1348, the epidemic certainly arrived in the city and outlying areas during the summer of 1361. In August of 1361 *domina Castella*, the wealthy widow of *Petrus Bonghi*, dictated a

¹¹⁴ I should note, however, that one reference from a valley north of Bergamo in 1356 describes the appearance of a "great mortality" seven years before, i.e. in 1349. ACVBg, CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 34r–37r.

¹¹⁵ For the 1348 wills, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 10 (1346–1348) 259–282. For those in the summer of 1347, see G. Soyarius, busta 9 (1347–48) 89–126. The absence of plague in Bergamo during 1348 fits with other accounts of the plague mostly bypassing Milan that year.

codicil to her will in which she changed her instructions about her burial, since she doubted she would be buried at the church of the Franciscans, where she had first asked for burial “on account of the *pestem* which now reigns.” She instead asked to be buried outside the walls of the city at the church of the Celestines, where she was living. This amendment to her will was created under a portico of the Celestine monastery, outside the city walls.¹¹⁶ The codicil suggests that wealthy families had already left the city to distance themselves from the spread of disease. Other indications that the plague had arrived in Bergamo in the summer of 1361 are found in the records of the Visconti governors of the city, who referred to those who had died “during the time of pestilence” in that year.¹¹⁷

Confraternities took action in the face of the epidemic.¹¹⁸ As it had in the past, the MIA made its notary, Gerardus Soyarius, available to citizens to redact their testaments. During the summer of 1361, Gerardus redacted 36 wills, mainly in August, probably the most plague-ridden month. MIA officials acted as witnesses to those wills, but even more significantly, since many individuals had already lost the family members who would normally serve as the executors of their wills, the MIA stepped in to fill this gap. Three officials of the MIA, including Albertus de Payerolis, the minister of the hospital of S. Vincenzo, served as *fidecommisarii*, or trustees, for the 25 wills redacted in the confraternity’s house that summer. Their role was to distribute bequests according to the instructions left by the testator.¹¹⁹ The services provided by the confraternity took their toll on its officials, as several of them died in the fall of 1361, in the

¹¹⁶ For the codicil, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 281–283.

¹¹⁷ *La politica finanziaria dei Visconti: Documenti (settembre 1329–agosto 1385)* C. Santoro, ed. (Milano, 1976) doc. 155, 129–130, cited in Gianluca Battioni, “La città di Bergamo tra signoria viscontea e signoria malatestiana,” *Storia Economica e Sociale di Bergamo: I primi Millenni, il Comune e La Signoria*, 217.

¹¹⁸ Confraternities elsewhere played a role in protecting their communities from epidemics. In San Sepolcro at the end of the fourteenth century, the fraternity of San Bartolomeo was delegated the responsibility of announcing the approach of plague to the town. Banker, *Death in the Community*, 99.

¹¹⁹ For the wills, see ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 165–332 and Iohannes Soyarius, busta 25. On the significance of the executor’s role, which normally fell to family members to carry out, see Kelly Wray, *Communities and Crisis*, 218. An earlier discussion of their significance is found in Steven Epstein, *Wills and Wealth in Medieval Genoa, 1150–1250* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984) 220–226.

weeks after plague made its first significant appearance in the city.¹²⁰ Both Gerardus and Albertus died in October of that year, likely succumbing to the illness that afflicted many of their clients.¹²¹

Despite the undeniably serious effect of the plague on the population of Italian cities, scholars have frequently remarked that wills reveal little evidence of the epidemic. For instance, Antonio Rigon has remarked on the absence of traces of “the trauma of the plague” from wills in mid-fourteenth century Padua.¹²² Similarly, in Bergamo, the content of testamentary bequests did not change drastically either during or after times of plague.¹²³ As they had done before the plague struck, testators used their wills to provide for their family members and their souls. There was, however, one important change of emphasis evident in wills made by both men and women during that time, roughly July through October of 1361. These demonstrated a desire, or perhaps a need, to spread bequests around a large group of heirs, including a broader group of family members and religious institutions such as the MIA and smaller confraternities.¹²⁴

Wills redacted by men in early middle age, with wives and young children, almost always named family members as the principal heirs to the testators’ estates. Many testators identified the need to bestow property on their sons, dower their unmarried daughters, and provide income for their wives and other female relatives. In addition, perhaps because many families had lost large numbers of their members during this period, testators often extended their bequests to more distant relatives. Changing circumstances sometimes resulted

¹²⁰ In addition, as elsewhere, clerics in Bergamo died in large numbers during the plague. The protocols of Francescus Zenaglia, notary to the episcopal curia in 1361, contain numerous references to meetings of the cathedral chapters of S. Vincenzo and S. Alessandro on October, 1361, to elect clerics to fill vacancies that had arisen on the death of clerics in that month. See ACVBg CAP 43 (F. Zenaglia) 88r–101r.

¹²¹ Gerardus wrote his final document on the kalends of October, 1361, and the hand in the final pages of that register looks increasingly large and uncontrolled. The document does not conclude with the appropriate forms, suggesting that the notary became too ill to complete it. Another record states that Gerardus died on October 7 of that year. BCBg, AB 229, 125r.

¹²² Rigon, “Orientamenti religiosi e pratica testamentaria a Padova,” in *Nolens Intestatus Decedere*, 61.

¹²³ A contrast to the findings of Samuel Cohn, who has argued for notable changes to testamentary practice after the plague of the early 1360s in Italy. See *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death*, 18–20 and *passim*.

¹²⁴ Shona Kelly Wray describes a similar phenomenon in Bologna. Kelly Wray, *Communities and Crisis*, 241.

in testators revising their customary definition of family. For instance, Bonettus, son of the late Iohannes de Rondis of Culzinate, redacted a version of his will in August and again in October of 1361. Both wills included conventional bequests for Bonettus' son Fachinus—who was to inherit his estate—and for Bonettus' wife domina Belina, whom he allowed to stay in his house during her lifetime, further granting her food, clothing, and furniture from the house. But Bonettus also extended this offer of shelter to his former (*quondam*) daughter-in-law, Anexia, daughter of the late Simone Pasaloy, who had once been married to his son Fachinus. Despite the fact that the couple's marriage had ended, Bonettus promised Anexia the same protection as he had promised his wife, giving her shelter in his house, as well as clothing, food and furniture for the rest of her life. Both women were instructed that this bequest was conditional on their not remarrying or demanding their dowries from the estate.¹²⁵ Although in part this bequest was probably shaped by Bonettus' desire to keep Anexia's dowry property within the control of his household, it also suggests that the definition of "family" became more flexible during a time in which conventional definitions of kinship bonds were threatened by large-scale mortality. Women also appear to have made their bequests to family members more flexible in this period. A widow named Domina Benvenuta acknowledged in her will of September, 1361, that her universal heir, her son Filippo, might die before coming of age, and in that case she wanted her nephew Iohannes to collect half of her estate instead. The other half she asked to be distributed among the poor of Bergamo.¹²⁶

Domina Benvenuta asked that the MIA carry out the distribution of her property to the poor, and her request resembled those of many other testators of the period. Confraternities, mendicants, parish priests and the poor continued to appear as beneficiaries in men's and women's wills alike during the worst moments of the plague, with bequests to several religious groups occurring with great frequency.¹²⁷ These testators also expected that religious services would

¹²⁵ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 227–229 and Iohannes Soyarius, busta 25, 2–3.

¹²⁶ BCBg, MIA perg. 1194.

¹²⁷ For instance, see the wills of Lazarinus fq domini Zonibille de Zonio (MIA perg. 765, September 14, 1361) Iohannes fq Martini de Alcardis de Curno *qui dicitur* Iohannes Sgorbie (MIA perg. 767, 13 October 1361) and domina Bona uq Oberti

continue in the face of the plague. In September, 1361, the testator Lazarinus de Zogno called on all members of the Dominican house of S. Stefano to attend his funeral, accompanied by members of the other mendicant orders in the city. He expected the funeral to be a significant event, asking that each friar process into the church holding candles, and that his body be surrounded by four large candles.¹²⁸ Domina Fantina, an unmarried testatrix, asked the members of the Franciscan house to say masses for her and pray for her soul, and she left her bed “for the use of the sick members of the convent.”¹²⁹ Testators, both male and female, also continued to leave large amounts of money and food in their wills for anniversary services after their deaths, demonstrating their belief that religious services would not be disrupted by the epidemic.¹³⁰

The MIA remained an important force in the community during the plague. As we have seen, it provided services to testators, and in turn, many testators directed substantial bequests to the company when they created their wills. Some named the MIA as heir to large parts of their estate, and others identified it as their substitute heir during this time, granting it their entire estates if their family members did not survive. These promises were often linked to the confraternity’s provision of its house and notary for the creation of the will. Of the 25 male and female testators who made wills in the MIA’s house during the summer of 1361, nine gave bequests to the confraternity directly, while ten made it their heir in the event that the family members they had named as heirs died.¹³¹ While the MIA had always been popular with testators, its provision of services to testators during the plague, and the nature of their bequests to it, underscored its role as the most authoritative confraternity in the

olim Teutaldi de Musinonibus de Zonio (ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 295–297, 10 September, 1361) which all left multiple bequests for confraternities, hospitals, mendicants and the poor.

¹²⁸ BCBg, MIA perg. 765.

¹²⁹ ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 330–332.

¹³⁰ For instance, see the September, 1361 will of domina Ricadona, widow of Asiatus de Beatis (ASBg, Notarile, G. Soyarius, busta 13 (1360–61) 287) which directed 10 *lire* for her *septima* and the October, 1361 will of Iohannes “Sgorbie,” which left salt, chickpeas, and money for the poor to be distributed on his *trentisimum*. BCBg, MIA perg. 767.

¹³¹ Of the 50 wills I have identified from 1361, 24 either made the MIA the substitute heir to the entire estate and/or provided bequests of 50 *lire* or more to the confraternity.

city and diocese. As Robert Brentano remarked on the similar impact of plague on the bishop's supervision of testaments in Rieti, "it is not entirely paradoxical . . . that the plague which generally destroyed order should have contributed to this kind of episcopal order."¹³² In Bergamo, these bequests to the MIA and other religious groups during a time of crisis reinforce the fact that lay men and women, divided by social distinctions during their lifetimes, were united in their articulation of the needs of their souls at the end of their lives.

¹³² Brentano, *A New World in a Small Place*, 300.

CONCLUSION

Discussions of the religious activities of lay people in the later Middle Ages have often focussed on the idea that the laity became a united “sacred community” in that period.¹ Another recent view holds that any “sexual segregation” within lay religious institutions in the Italian cities of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries came about as the result of “women’s aversion to elaborate organization and their desire for autonomy” rather than a deliberate attempt on the part of a male elite to exclude women from full membership in their communities.² Throughout this study I have argued instead that the increasingly-rigid social hierarchies of late medieval civic life also shaped the formation of religious institutions for the laity. Lay women and poor men did not avoid conventional Christian institutions in order to experience their own brand of autonomous piety. Rather, they participated enthusiastically in these institutions in their earliest years, and were gradually shut out of them as the institutions grew in stature and wealth.

As the final chapter shows, it is not my argument that men and women, rich and poor, had different religious *beliefs*. The vision of the laity as a separate *ordo* within the Christian realm, united both by their distinctiveness from the clergy and also by a shared goal of salvation for their souls was accepted by everyone, regardless of gender and status. This is evident in the way people of different backgrounds sought to join or donate to confraternities and hospitals, made wills, and attended local churches. As they made a Christian life together, lay people also created communities and networks in which they found companionship and security. It was these religious communities which were subject to the changing social mores of the period. Women’s communities within hospitals, which provided security, companionship, and perhaps spiritual satisfaction to those who joined them, did not outlast the fourteenth century. Similarly, women and poor men who had donated to the MIA in its earliest years

¹ James Banker, *Death in the Community*, 177.

² Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 1125–1325*, 97.

(and had their donations acknowledged in its registers) were implicitly discouraged from doing so in later decades, as the confraternity focussed on wealthier, more powerful benefactors. Wealthy men did not experience the same kind of exclusion. The institutions they participated in—such as the MIA and the episcopal court—continued to welcome their presence over the course of the century. In this way, although from the theologians' point of view all of the laity continued to enjoy the same access to salvation, over time the majority of lay people lost access to the companionship, security and spiritual solace that religious associations had provided. And at the same time, women and poor men increasingly became the object of scrutiny for authorities, both lay and ecclesiastical, seeking to regulate the religious life of the community.

But, as we have also seen, this bleak view of the fragmented religious life of the laity in Bergamo is not the complete picture. Women and poor men were not without resources. In several contexts, including in their wills, before the episcopal court, and through pilgrimages, women and poor men located themselves within the religious realm alongside their more privileged counterparts. Women, in particular, used the institutions of lay Christianity to satisfy their own spiritual and social needs as often as possible. Through their establishment of communities within hospitals, their transformation of their domestic possessions into liturgical objects, and their early support for confraternal charity (along with their joining of the MIA in such large numbers) women in Bergamo displayed significant religious enthusiasm through the fourteenth century.

Women's involvement in Christian life is much better-documented than the religious activities of paupers in this period. But the fragmentary evidence that does survive about the religious activities of the poor—and their vision of themselves within the Christian universe—suggests once again that regulation and control from above did not render all paupers passive. Instead, we should remember that paupers also saw themselves as supporters of confraternities, and that they joined extraordinary events such as the pilgrimage led by Venturino da Bergamo with the aim of satisfying the needs of their souls. We have also seen that involvement of the poor in religious institutions, including confraternities and hospitals, was in part motivated by what these groups could offer them: a bed, food, and medical care. But the donations by paupers to confraternities in the early

fourteenth century indicate that the poor also sought to save their souls by providing for others in need.

Wealthy men did not experience the same exclusion from religious associations, or the same scrutiny by ecclesiastical authorities. For many of them, lay religious associations provided social power as well as religious satisfaction. But for these men, social ambitions and religious enthusiasm were intertwined, and the former did not negate the latter. Ministers of the MIA might have become civic authorities, but they also remained members of a brotherhood that provided them with spiritual benefits. I opened this study with a description of the twenty-one men from Schilpario who described their activities within their local churches. The testimony of those men contained no shocking revelations about their religious beliefs or their pious habits. Instead, their descriptions of their religious lives suggested that they modeled them on Christian doctrines set down by ecclesiastical officials in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The example of Bergamo suggests that the religious views of most lay people of both genders and every social status resembled those of these men. But in the end, the voices of these men of substance, not those of women or poor men, were those that articulated the views of their *ordo*. Women and the poor, despite their enthusiasm for participation in religious life, had few opportunities to describe their involvement in orthodox Christian life, and the waning of those opportunities was increasingly evident as the fourteenth century drew to a close.

WORKS CITED

Primary Sources

The source base for this book was primarily the collection of notarial registers for the fourteenth century located in several archives in the city of Bergamo. In the *Archivio di Stato*, these registers are catalogued by *busta* number. A *busta* is a type of box which may contain one or several registers. Wherever possible I have noted the years of the registers I consulted, since registers for several years might be contained within the same *busta*. These registers have been given modern pagination in the *Archivio di Stato*, although in other archives folio numbers remain the only reference. The registers themselves could be either paper or parchment, and most were remarkably well-preserved and easy to decipher. Anyone undertaking this type of research should be aware, however, that individual documents within the registers are not catalogued, and notaries in Bergamo did not list the records within their registers separately until quite late in the fourteenth century (if they did so at all). The researcher's time, then, is spent paging through the registers searching for relevant documents. I have listed archives and types of documents I consulted below, along with names of notaries and document numbers where applicable.

Archivio di Stato, Bergamo, Fondo Notarile: This archive is remarkably large for the fourteenth century, containing the registers of more than one hundred notaries active during that period. I have drawn on documents from the following:

- G. Soyarius, busta 5–14
- A. de Crene, busta 16
- G. fu A Piazza busta 17d
- G. Parvis, busta 19, 20 and busta 22
- L. Foppa Buzzoni, busta 24b
- G. fu G Soyarius, busta 25
- A. Lizzia, busta 25b
- M. Blotti, busta 26
- A. Capitani de Scalve, busta 27a
- A. Barzizza busta 28a
- F. Ventraria busta 29c
- P. Panizzolis, busta 45
- F. Zenaglia, busta 57
- G. Mozzi, busta 84a/b
- M. Zampaila, busta 89, 90
- V. da Poma, busta 98
- B. Bondo, busta 103
- A. Panizolli busta 109b
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- B. Vianova, busta 135
- B. Seminati, busta 142
- G. Uciporci, busta 149
- G. fu A de Panizollis, busta 159
- G. de Panizollis, busta 161 and 162

Collections of the Biblioteca Civica 'Angelo Mai'

- *Archivio del Consorzio della Misericordia* (MIA archivio). This is the paper archive of the confraternity of the Misericordia Maggiore, a substantial archive reaching back to the foundation of the company in 1265. The lists of the confraternity's expenses and donations received date to that early period. I have consulted and in some cases used very extensively the following documents:
553/ 583/ 602/ 603/ 604/ 605/ 715/ 718/ 724/ 725/ 727/ 728/ 730/ 799/ 912/ 937/ 938/ 1146/ 1245/ 1383 bis/ 1814/ 1945
- *Archivio del Consorzio della Misericordia, pergamene* (MIA perg.)
- *Manoscritti della Biblioteca Civica 'Angelo Mai'* (BCBg):

AAB 225

AB 72

AB 229

AB 385

AB 394

MAB 36

MMB 121

A. Mazzoleni, *Zibaldone di memorie riguardanti Bergamo, ossia libro A, B, C, L, M, N*
Sala 1 N 10 2/3

Specola Doc 403

- *Pergamene del Comune di Bergamo* (PCB)

Other archives

Parish Archive of S. Caterina and Parish Archive of S. Alessandro in Colonna. Neither archive contains significant material for the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, but S. Alessandro in Colonna does contain several registers of wills and confraternity documents for the fifteenth century that would be worth exploring. Both archives, as is often the case with small collections, are staffed by volunteers and are open for brief periods in the week.

Archivio della Compagnia della Roggia Morlana. This archive is run by the still-extant Compagnia della Roggia Morlana, housed in the offices of an engineering firm in Bergamo.

Archivio della Curia Vescovile, Bergamo. (ACVBg) This archive contains substantial documentary material for the history of the Church in Bergamo during the fourteenth century and after. For more on this archive and other diocesan archives in Italy, see the recent set of volumes published by the Associazione Archivistica Ecclesiastica, *Guida degli Archivi diocesani d'Italia*, vols. 1–3, Roma: Ministero per I Beni Culturali e Ambientali, 1990–1998.

Notarial registers from this archive include:

B. de Ossa, CAP 4

A. Aneniis, CAP 6–10

T. de Casteniate CAP 31 and 32

F. Zenaglia, CAP 43–48

S. de Cazzolonibus CAP 74–79

Also contained in this archive are the parchments of the cathedral chapters of Bergamo, (Pergamene Capitolari).

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